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FOR MODERN EXPLORERS

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YUKON
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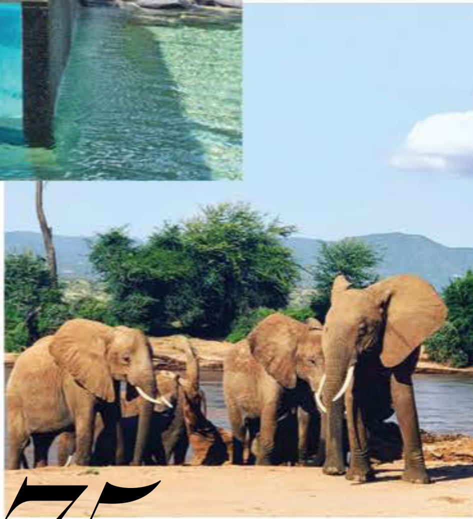

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PHOTOGRAPHY LYNN GAIL (ON SAFARI WITH BENCH AFRICA); EDWINA HART (PASSALACQUA IN LAKE COMO, MAHARAJAS' EXPRESS)

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INTERNATIONAL
Traveller
The Great Escape

ON THE COVER
Passalacqua, Lake Como, Italy
Credit: Edwina Hart

EXCHANGE RATES
We've converted all local currencies to Australian dollars to make reading and travel planning easier for you. The rates were all converted at the time of editing and are subject to change.

JUST SO YOU KNOW
Care has been taken to ensure the information contained in this issue is accurate and up to date at the time of going to print. Always check for the latest available information and updates when planning your next adventure.

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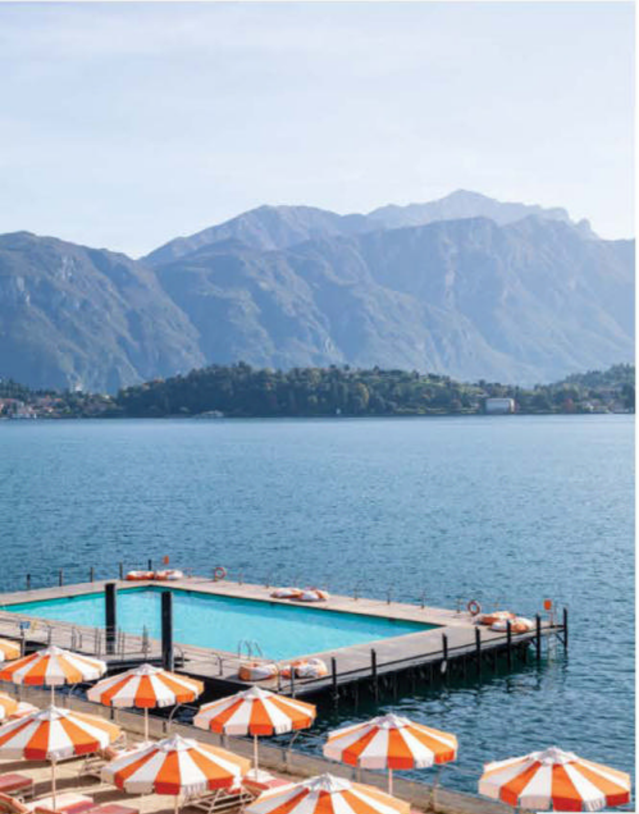
editor's letter



Travelling overseas for the first time since January 2020 was a revelation. Any last-minute anxieties I experienced in the lead-up to the trip – the now-standard worries over whether you've collated the correct paperwork; checking, for the 11th time, entry requirements for your destination – melted away as I felt the sun of another hemisphere on my face again. I was back in Europe and, with its timeworn streets buzzing with life and other languages, it was reminding me loud and clear that the world was, in fact, still here. It was pure joy.

Breaking that barrier was the first step towards reclaiming something all travellers lost during the pandemic years: the permission to wanderlust with impunity and dream with abandon. To entertain wildly capricious ideas about ultimate holidays or untold adventures and set about making those ideas a reality. To go big or go home.

So, to really wash away the residue of the last few years, we invite you to plot your own great escape. You might want to follow in the footsteps of Edwina Hart as she spends a glorious few days steeped in the glamour of Lake Como (page 80) or hit California's legendary Highway One as Craig Tansley does (page 98) for a road trip like no other. Leigh-Ann Pow returns to Japan to find the big appeal in the smallest of details (page 90) and Elizabeth Whitehead makes tracks for the Indian Himalayan town of Dharamshala (page 52) to sit for an audience with the Dalai Lama. Along the way we also take a fully carbon-offset scenic flight to the South Pole, hike Patagonia, party at Rio Carnival, join a bucket-list safari in South Africa and Kenya and sleep in a bothy on the grounds of Balmoral Estate.

And I visit Monaco on page 46. When I arrived on one of those blue-sky days of my Euro trip last year, I couldn't help but be seduced by the gilded edges of a place that really does epitomise the phrase 'go big or go home'. Yet for me, the best thing about exploring this tiny principality on the Côte d'Azur was learning about the astounding sustainability efforts that underpin life here and scratching beneath the shimmering surface to find its quirky, authentic side. Immersion, connection, a change of perspective: isn't that what it's all about?

Let's recapture the joy in travel.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Lose yourself in the timeless glamour of Lake Como (p80); Revel in the romance of the Riviera in Monaco (p46); Experience India's 'Little Tibet' in the Himalayan town of Dharamshala (p52).*

Imogen Eveson

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editor@internationaltraveller.com

PHOTOGRAPHY EDWINA HART (LAKE COMO); GUY BAILEY (HEADSHOT)

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INTERNATIONAL Traveller

FOR MODERN EXPLORERS

We asked our team: what's your ultimate great escape?

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AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER

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Hiring a villa in southern Spain for a summer spent sipping sangria among the orange and lemon trees.

A European adventure with an epic mix of cities, beaches and cultures packed into one trip.

Somewhere wild like the Scottish Highlands, preferably a place without phone reception.

My idea of a great escape would be visiting Cuba, with its breathtaking beaches and historical architecture.

It's all about the wilderness for me; I love the idea of a safari in Madikwe, South Africa.

Renting a caravan and exploring New Zealand's South Island with a big stack of good books.

Chasing and dancing with the enchanting Northern Lights in Iceland.

The dream is to spend an idle month sailing the Dalmatian Coast.

A safari in the Serengeti with a mix of wildlife and culture; I'd love to catch the Great Migration.

Seeing the Seine via the Seine à Vélo cycle route in Paris for a mix of culture, history and heritage.

I did Laos, Cambodia and Thailand on a motorbike; the luxe and not so luxe.

The island of Syros in Greece is home for me, so I'd love to go back and stay somewhere overlooking the Aegean Sea.

Strolling the cobbled streets of an old European city would be nice.

A simple trip to the beach, hanging out and enjoying the sea breeze away from urban noise.

I would love to do a White Desert safari in Antarctica.

A few weeks at the Sundance Film Festival; skiing and films sound like a winning combination.

Two weeks on Tavarua would be ideal because of its perfect surfing waves and great food.

Riding my bike along a long and secluded trail.

A summer in a coastal Greek town that hasn't seen mass tourism.

New Zealand for natural wonders like Milford Sound.

I went on an amazing five-hour kayaking and hiking tour of Uluwehi Falls in Kaua'i, Hawai'i.

I've experienced Paraguay but I'd love to go to Vietnam.

I'd love to sail down the Nile River on a 19th-century luxury steamer.

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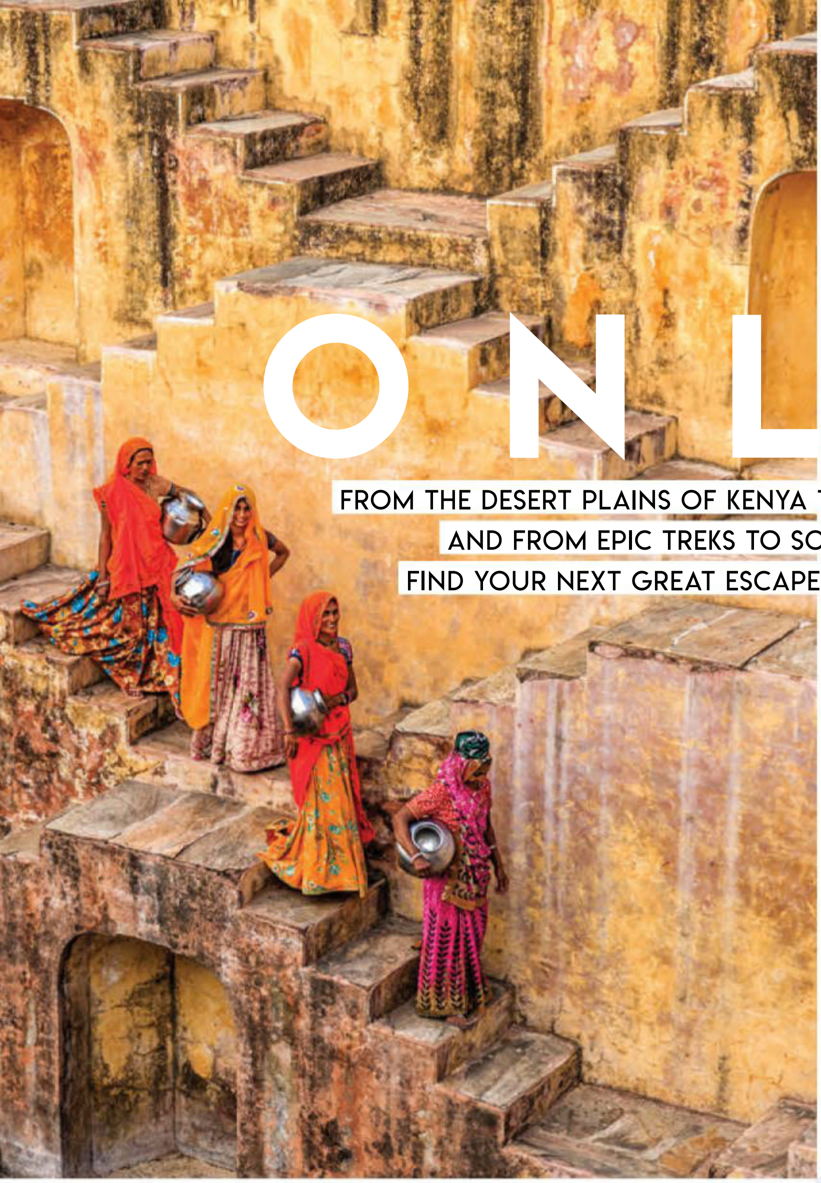

ONLINE

FROM THE DESERT PLAINS OF KENYA TO THE TOWERING GLACIERS OF ANTARCTICA, AND FROM EPIC TREKS TO SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST RAIL JOURNEYS, FIND YOUR NEXT GREAT ESCAPE ON *INTERNATIONALTRAVELLER.COM*

TRAVERSE INDIA'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE

As one of the largest countries on Earth, it's impossible to see all of India in one trip. So, where do you start? India's Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra and Jaipur) will offer you everything you're craving on this copacetic continent.

TOP FIVE TREKS AROUND THE GLOBE

Conquer these awesome treks and you'll be rewarded with views only few have seen. Climb mountains, traverse valleys and spot volcanoes; just don't forget your hiking boots!

SAFARI THROUGH MAASAI MARA

Lions and tigers and… hippos? Oh my! Safari across the plains of Maasai Mara over three jam-packed days to experience Kenyan culture, history and wildlife against one of the world's most striking backdrops.

CRUISE THE ANTARCTIC

From historic insights and close interactions with some of nature's most isolated wildlife to active volcanoes and tumbling glaciers, here are 20 reasons why you should add Antarctica to your bucket list.

WORLD'S BEST TRAIN JOURNEYS

Norway, Switzerland, South America… these very different countries all have one thing in common: epic train journeys. Venture along these tracks that wind around mountains and cross deserts to experience a train trip like no other.

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boundless *landscapes*

Embark on an epic exploration, visit the wondrous places you've dreamt of, discover hidden gems and insider knowledge – or simply just soak up the awe-inspiring view.

Awaiting you is a series of inspiring, life-enriching moments.

Uluṟu, Northern Territory – Outback Contrasts Journey

Witness the rugged landscape of the Red Centre and marvel at the ancient cultures that have cared for this land for generations. Experience the majesty of Uluṟu and view rock art dating back thousands of years, witness these striking landscapes and feel immersed in the stories they hold.

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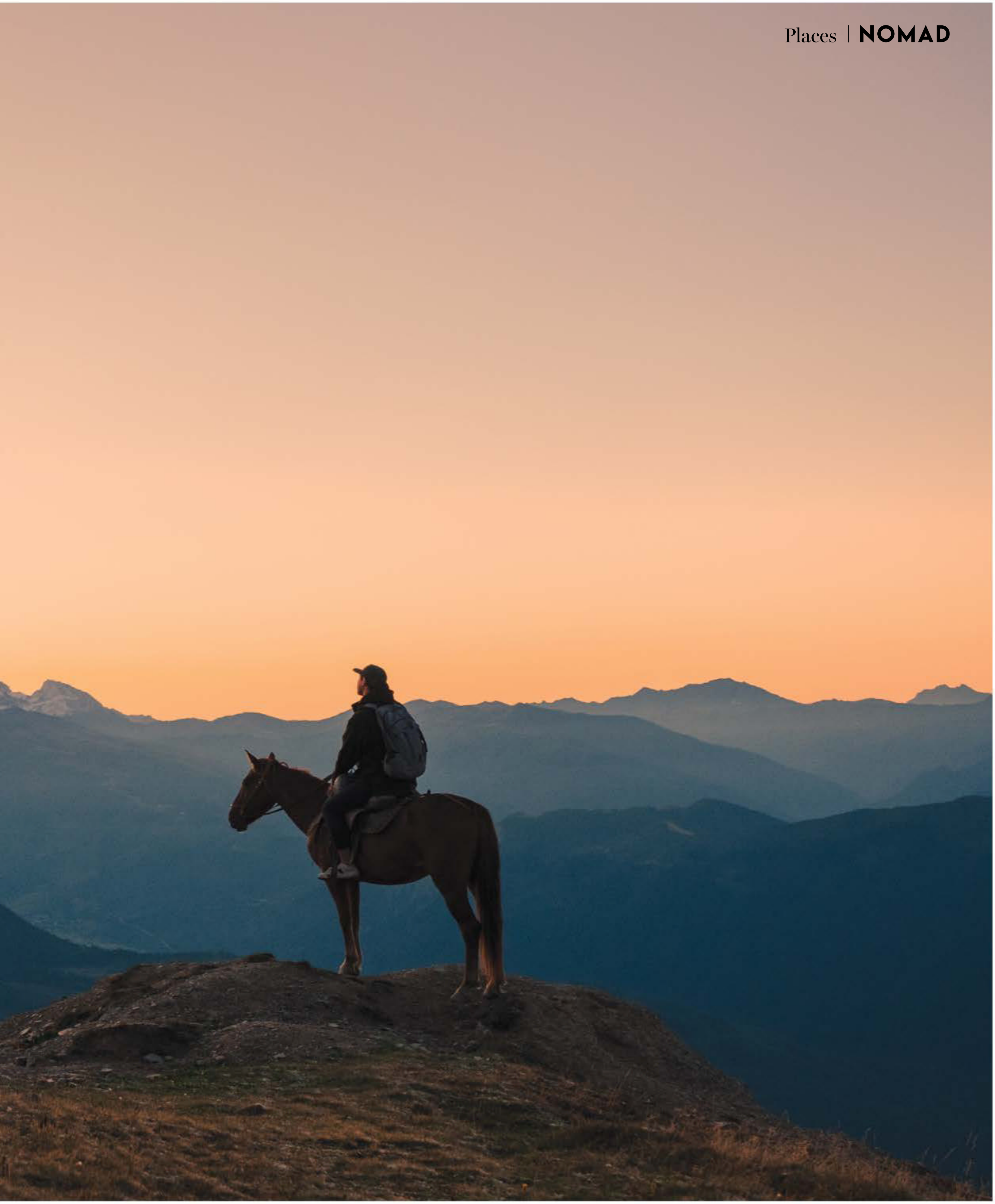
NOMAD

A SILENT REVERIE

Ahu Bay has been designed for dreamy meditations and musings. It's one of two new laid-back Reverie properties by Resplendent Ceylon in Sri Lanka. It's a place to watch palm trees bending into the wind and the ocean rushing to shore. Ahu Bay on Ahungalla Point embraces the slow pace of life the island embodies. Turn to page 20 for more.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

"We're on alpine terrain, at an elevation of about 2750 metres, and the red line on a passing thermometer is negligible," writes photographer Jiwon Kim of the moments before capturing this shot. "We've ridden 2.5 hours and climbed another kilometre from the already high-lying village of Mestia, the capital of the Upper Svaneti in Georgia, to experience sunrise at the foot of the Ushba. On the journey upward, village scenes give way to rocky mountainous inclines. The fresh alpine scents and brisk near-zero air invigorate our tired bodies. Our long exhalations leave paths of misty clouds as we rise and dip on the saddles in tandem with our stallions' rhythmic trots. On arrival at the plateau, the inky darkness lifts slowly, the air becomes increasingly frigid. Our bodies shudder in the chill, but the excitement grows; for after the freeze comes dawn." **IT**



THE LOWDOWN

FROM A LUXE JET JOURNEY OVER THE AFRICAN CONTINENT TO A VERTICAL RESORT IN THE FUTURISTIC CITY OF DUBAI, HERE'S ALL THE INSPO YOU NEED TO GO BIG OR GO HOME WITH YOUR TRAVEL PLANS THIS YEAR AND BEYOND.

GREEN SCENE

Singapore has become the first country in the world to be certified as a sustainable destination. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council awarded the certification based on the island nation's commitment to sustainable management, socio-economic sustainability, cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability.

REBEL AT HEART

Rascal Voyages is sailing into 2023 in style onboard *Rebel*, a traditional Dutch-inspired *phinisi* yacht that accommodates just 10 guests. The yacht, which joins flagship *Rascal* (pictured left), is built around the concept of a floating villa and includes a wine cellar and outdoor cinema. Rascal Voyages is now sailing through Indonesia, with imminent plans to expand to Malaysia and Thailand. *rascalvoyages.com*

DUBAI BY DESIGN

Crafted by the world's leading designers, architects and artists, Atlantis The Royal (top right) turns the concept of traditional resort architecture on its head by punching 43 storeys into the sky. The vertical resort's focal theme of fire and water extends beyond those views over the Arabian Gulf and Palm Island lagoon to include innovative fire water features, such as *Skyblaze*, an arty fountain with programmable plumes of fire. *atlantis.com*

ROYAL TREATMENT

Prix Versailles awarded Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan (above right) with a 2022 World Architecture and Design Award for the Hotels category. Melbourne-based designers Mitchell & Eades were behind the decade-long transformation of the 14th-century fort into a luxury hotel that enhances the building's architectural legacy. The resort, once owned by a Rajasthani royal family, is now a stylish Six Senses sanctuary with 48 one-bedroom suites. *sixsenses.com*

HEAVENLY SEVEN

Abercrombie & Kent has launched a private jet journey that travels to seven countries on the African continent. Highlights include visiting the pyramids with an Egyptologist, searching for mountain gorillas in Rwanda and witnessing wildlife in Tanzania's Serengeti on the 22-day tour. *abercrombiekent.com.au*

Abercrombie

ON TOUR

Renaissance under way

Renaissance Tours has launched a new series of art and archaeology-focused tours for 2023. The series is a celebration of a 20-year partnership with the Art Gallery Society of NSW, which helps to curate the tours to far-flung places such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Central Asia. *renaissancetours.com.au*

Walk the walk

Explore the natural and cultural riches of Japan on one of Walk Japan's new 2023 tours. Culture and nature go hand-in-hand in Japan and the Tokaido Trail has much to offer on the leisurely seven-day tour along an ancient highway. Stay in traditional ryokan and hike forest trails while learning more about modern and ancient Japan. *walkjapan.com*

From culture to conservation

Abercrombie & Kent's collection of Limited Edition Small Group Journeys will take curious minds everywhere from the Sacred Spiny Forest of Madagascar to the coffee plantations of West Africa's Togo and from the palaces of Seoul to the backwaters and beaches in the south of India. *abercrombiekent.com.au*

Armchair travel

Don't stress if your passport has expired. Limelight Arts Travel has a roster of in-depth online lectures hosted by experts in fine art, history and the performing arts. The lecture series for 2023 includes topics such as Magnificent Milan and its revival as a centre of art and design. Art travellers can also sign up for actual tours such as Music in Venice. *limelight-arts-travel.com.au*

Italian interlude

Take a deep dive into Italian food and heritage with Australian-Italian chef Valerio Fantinelli and professional Italy-based tour guide Luca Rocconi on a culinary art tour experience with Italy Tour Co. Highlights include a cooking class in Marlon Brando's former Roman apartment. *italytour.com.au*

CRUISE NEWS

That's the spirit

Silversea became the first global cruise line to sail from Hong Kong in almost three years onboard ultra-luxury ship *Silver Spirit* (pictured above). Silversea will visit the destination on voyages ranging from 10 to 16 days. *silversea.com*

A river runs through it

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises (pictured below) has launched a 55-night Rivers of the World cruise that will take in three continents and 10 countries onboard four luxury Super Ships. *uniworld.com*

Where the wild things are

Hurtigruten has expanded its Galápagos Islands portfolio onboard the upgraded *MS Santa Cruz II*. There is now a seven-day Iconic Wildlife & Sublime Scenery cruise, an 11-day Nine of the Best Isles cruise and seven-day Nature and Wildlife cruise. *hurtigruten.com.au*

Spot the big five in Africa

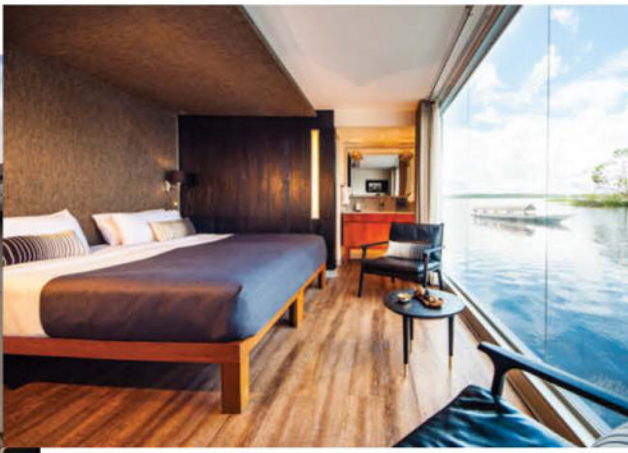
Norwegian Cruise Line has expanded its offerings in Africa with five new itineraries. Spot the Big Five on a 12-day Africa: South Africa & Madagascar itinerary from Port Louis. *ncl.com*

Austral traveller

Set sail for the next big thing in the Pacific with a cruise to the Austral Islands, which includes Raivavae and Rapa. Aranui Cruises is the only cruise line offering dedicated Austral Island cruises in 2023. *aranuicruises.com.au*

ON TREND... Location, location

Set-jetting is the travel trend of 2023 that sees serial Netflix binge watchers insert themselves into the backdrops of their favourite shows. According to Expedia, almost 30 per cent of Australians have booked trips to destinations after seeing them on streaming services. Think Hawai'i and Sicily (thanks to The White Lotus*), and the city of Derry in Northern Ireland, where an interactive* Derry Girls *trail is in development.*



WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI **PHOTOGRAPHY** ABERCROMBIE & KENT (AEROPLANE): ARJUN MENON (SIX SENSES FORT BARWARA): ASHLEY DRODY PHOTOGRAPHY (RASCAL VOYAGES)

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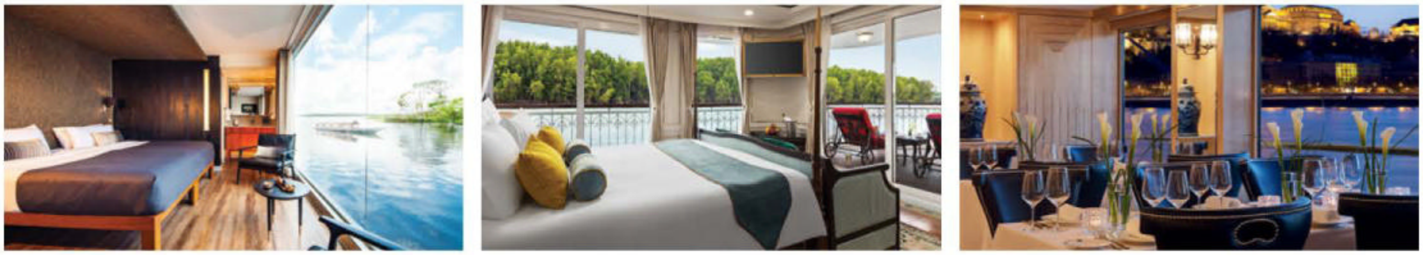

Experience this once-in-a-lifetime world cruise, with unparalleled, all-inclusive luxury onboard four Uniworld river ships and spectacular land tours over 55 days, staying at some of the world's finest hotels, culminating with a Grand Finale Dinner in Vietnam with breathtaking views of Ho Chi Minh City's skyline.

This is a unique opportunity to get up close and personal with iconic destinations such as Machu Picchu, Iguazu Falls, Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, historic wineries in Provence, private classical music concerts in Vienna, Halong Bay and Angkor Wat in Cambodia - all in one trip - and everything is taken care of in a small group of only 68 guests.

THE DETAILS

From 3 October to 26 November, 2024, you'll travel from Lima to Ho Chi Minh City over 54 nights.

THE DESTINATIONS

Across South America, Europe and Southeast Asia, you'll discover a total of 10 countries all in one trip.

THE ACCOMMODATIONS

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- All internal flights, porterage and transfers throughout

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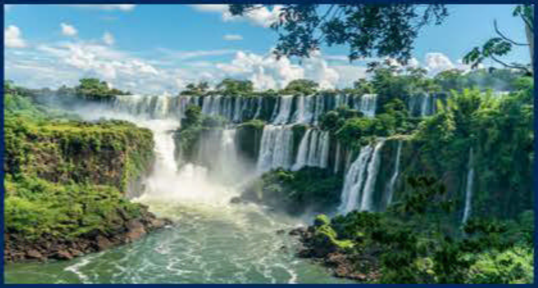
SCAN ME

2024 Rivers of the World Itinerary Highlights



Part 1

16 Days | *Aria Amazon / Aqua Nera*
Countries: Peru, Argentina, Brazil

Part 2

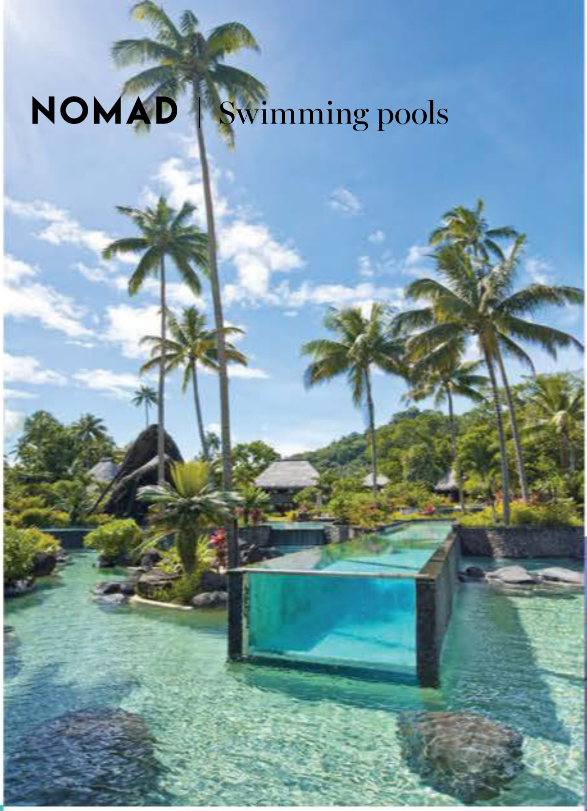
16 Days | *S.S. Beatrice*
Countries: Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Hungary

Part 3

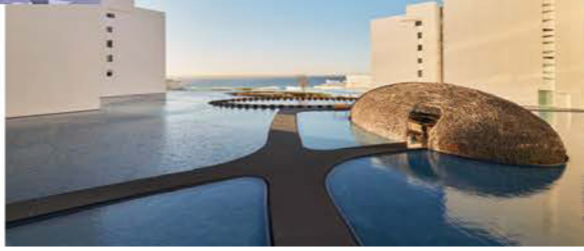
8 Days | *S.S. Catherine*
Country: France

Part 4

16 Days | *Mekong Jewel*
Countries: Vietnam, Cambodia



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *A tropical dip at Como Laucala, Fiji; Alpine views from Hotel Villa Honegg, Switzerland; The sprawling pools of Viceroy Los Cabos in Mexico; Swim above Singapore at Marina Bay Sands; A desert oasis at Aman Amangiri in the US.*



A bigger splash

FROM SKY-HIGH INFINITY POOLS TO INTIMATE OASES THAT SHIMMER GOLD, HERE ARE FIVE OF THE BEST HOTEL SWIMMING POOLS AROUND THE WORLD. DIVE STRAIGHT IN.

MARINA BAY SANDS, SINGAPORE

At 150 metres long and straddling the rooftops of three 57-storey buildings, the Marina Bay Sands has the world's longest elevated pool. The stratospheric pool was described as an architectural feat when it opened as part of Marina Bay Sands Resort in 2010 and boasts panoramic views of the city from the water's edge. The pool opens from 6am, giving early birds an incredible vantage point to catch the sunrise from behind the skyline, and doesn't close until 11pm, well after the sky turns to black and the city is illuminated with sparkling lights. Between dips, guests can lounge under palm trees and enjoy food and drinks from a rooftop dining menu designed by renowned LA chef Wolfgang Puck. Open to hotel guests only. *marinabaysands.com*

AMAN AMANGIRI, UTAH, USA

It may seem like a mirage but Aman Amangari is, in fact, the very definition of an oasis in the desert. This luxurious modernist hotel is nestled on a 364-hectare property in the Colorado Plateau of Utah – aka the Wild West. Surrounded by rugged canyons, otherworldly mesas, sharp ridges and deep gorges, this remote hideaway is made for luxe-loving adventurers who come to enjoy hiking and canyoning in a landscape that is the picture of a final frontier. At the heart of the hotel, a striking swimming pool with an aqua hue punctuates the muted palette of the arid desert and rocky terrain that surrounds it. Open to hotel guests only, the pool is a refreshing respite from the dry heat of America's Canyon Country. *aman.com*

VICEROY LOS CABOS, MEXICO

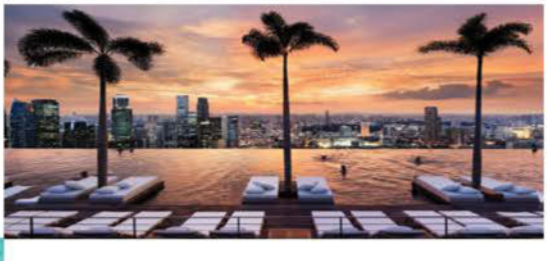
The Baja California Peninsula or the end of Earth? At the Viceroy Los Cabos, it's hard to tell, with views across the ocean to the horizon from almost every angle of the hotel. Paying tribute to the subtropical locale, the resort comprises not one but five pools: two on the beachfront, an adults-only option on the rooftop and two in the central courtyard. It's the latter that catches our breath: these circular swimming holes are set within another vast body of water that stretches the entire space between the resort's sleek white buildings, creating the illusion that they are floating. Guests can reach these pools via a teak boardwalk, which also leads to a nest-like structure that houses Japanese restaurant Nido. *viceroyhotelsandresorts.com*

COMO LAUCALA ISLAND, FIJI

Reached by private charter, this exclusive island off the coast of Vanua Levu is as close to paradise as you'll get. The island is wild with lush vegetation, volcanic mountains, mangroves and coconut groves, flanked by waters that transpose between every shade of blue imaginable. The resort is constructed with local timber and thatched roofs; its organic pool set among swaying palm trees and tropical gardens. There are multiple nooks to wade about, as well as a glass-fronted lap pool and sandy beach for kids. *comohotels.com*

HOTEL VILLA HONEGG, SWITZERLAND

Located in Switzerland's Bürgenstock alpine region, this 1905-built hotel sits at more than 900 metres above sea level and takes in sweeping views of snow-capped mountains, Lake Lucerne and the storybook villages nestled along its banks. The pool is set to 34 degrees year-round, idyllic for dips even in below-zero temperatures. It's part of the hotel spa, which also includes a Finnish sauna, steam bath and relaxing treatments. All are open to the public for an entrance fee. *villa-honegg.ch*



WORDS MEGAN ARKINSTALL **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN HAYDEN (AMAN AMANGIRI)

In partnership with Japan National Tourism Organization

Wild swimming in Japan

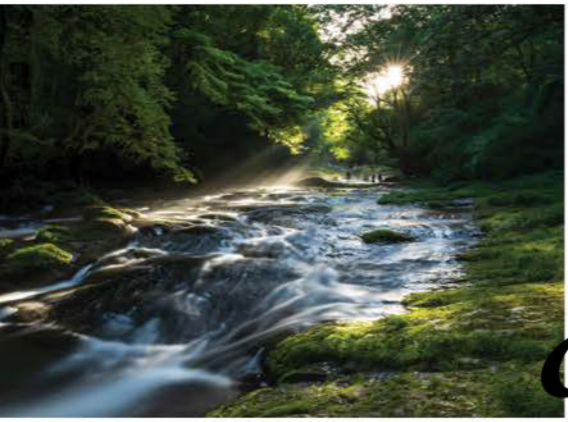
Immerse yourself in nature – literally – in these stunning Japanese rivers, waterfalls and lakes, all perfect for a quick dip.

The breathtaking natural landscape of this country is the ultimate environment for immersive experiences, so it's little wonder that 'wild swimming', the act of seeking out natural bodies of water to splash, soak and float in, is gaining in popularity. From lakeside beaches to river shallows and waterfalls that act as waterslides, the options for taking the plunge are plentiful and pristine.

1

LAKE MOTOSU XX

Located on the north-western edge of Mt Fuji and part of the Mt Fuji UNESCO World Heritage Site, swimming is a popular pastime at Lake Motosu, which is renowned as the clearest of the Fuji Five Lakes. Less than two hours' drive from Tokyo in Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park in Yamanashi, Lake Motosu's pristine surroundings are enough to recommend it; add the prospect of a swim (accompanied by an experienced guide from the Lake Motosu Activity Center) as well as a view of Mt Fuji, and it becomes an instantly irresistible prospect.



2

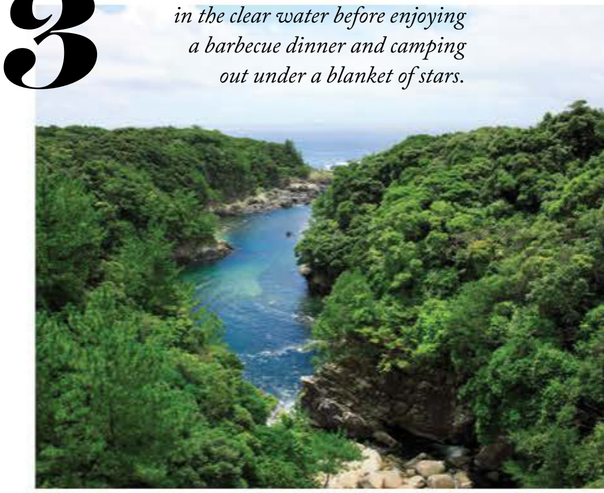
SENJOKAWARA

Located an easy drive from Kumamoto City on the island of Kyushu, Senjokawara is a delightful swimming spot on the Kikuchi River near Kikuchi Gorge. Sitting within Aso-Kuju National Park, the shallows at this bend in the river are the result of a broad shelf of pyroclastic flow from the nearby active volcano, Mt Aso. The volcano has also created natural paddling pools that are perfect for splashing about in, making it a popular wild swimming option for families during the warmer months.

Kurio River

Located in the south of Yakushima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture within the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Yakushima (Island) National Park, the natural plunge pools of the Kurio River provide the perfect spot to cool off in after you've taken a kayak tour of the area. You can swim away the day's exertions in the clear water before enjoying a barbecue dinner and camping out under a blanket of stars.

3



TA-TAKI FALLS

LOCATED ON THE HENAN RIVER IN NORTHERN OKINAWA ISLAND, TA-TAKI FALLS CASCADE INTO A DELIGHTFULLY SHELTERED POOL THAT'S SURROUNDED BY SUB-TROPICAL FOLIAGE. ACCESSING THE FALLS INVOLVES TREKKING THROUGH LUSH FOREST AND, IN PARTS, HIKING THROUGH GENTLY FLOWING RIVERBEDS. THE REWARD AT THE END? BEING SURROUNDED BY NATURE AS YOU WADE AND FLOAT IN THE COOL WATERS.

4

Start planning your next trip at japan.travel/en/au

WORDS LEIGH-ANN POW
PHOTOGRAHY OCVB (TA-TAKI FALLS)

Don Rafa Boutique Hotel, San Juan

The six-storey Don Rafa Boutique Hotel is located in Miramar in the heart of the historic district of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Art is at the centre of this boutique hotel, with each of its 36 rooms, suites and residences inspired by mid-century styling and decorated with artworks produced by local Puerto Ricans. The convenient location of the carefully curated hotel also offers a peek into the rhythm of life in the Puerto Rican capital. donrafaboutiquehotel.com

PILLOW TALK

FROM A CABIN IMMERSED IN NATURE IN NORWAY TO A CHIC NEW STAY IN PUERTO RICO AND DESIGNER DIGS IN WELLINGTON, HERE ARE THE HOTTEST SPOTS TO CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT ON YOUR NEXT OVERSEAS ESCAPE.

REVERIE, SRI LANKA

Two boutique properties by new hotel brand Reverie have opened in Sri Lanka (from the team behind leading luxury hotel collection Resplendent Ceylon). Kayaam House in Tangalle and Ahu Bay in Ahungalla are located two hours apart on the country's south coast, near to spell-bindingly beautiful beaches and overlooking the Indian Ocean. The two hotels have also curated a roster of experiences designed to give guests an insight into the country's rich cultural life. *thereverie.life*

Le Regina and Le Garage, Biarritz

Le Regina and Le Garage are set to reopen following full refurbishments. The two hotels in Biarritz, in the French Basque Country, are part of the Experimental Group's uber-cool collection. Le Regina first opened in 1907 and boasts views across to the Biarritz lighthouse. Le Garage next door is a former garage that became a hotel in 2020. *experimentalgroup.com*

WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI **PHOTOGRAPHY** JODIE TICE (THE HOXTON); BITMAP/HENRIK MOKSNES (STARLODGE CABIN INTERIOR); SAM HARTNETT (NAUMI WELLINGTON); CHZON DESIGNER DOROTHEE MEILICHZON (EXPERIMENTAL)

The Hoxton, Shepherd's Bush

There were once so many Aussies living in Shepherd's Bush that expats living in the London borough dubbed it Shepherd's Beaut. The Hoxton group's fourth outpost in the city is a fancier option than the scuzzy share houses that once dotted the suburb, also known for its rock'n'roll and vintage fashion. But the boutique hotel still brings the vibes with 237 rooms, a wraparound bar and a fiery Thai-Americana diner. Choose a room to suit your stay, from Snug and Cosy to Roomy and a new basement Hideout. thehoxton.com

THE BOLDER, NORWAY
Guests can sleep with their head in the clouds at the new luxury StarLodges, which have opened over the breathtaking fjord landscape in Norway. Like the sister SkyLodges from The Bolder brand, the Scandi-chic cabins have been carefully placed to soak up all the drama of Lysefjord, just 40 minutes from the city of Stavanger. *thebolder.no*

Naumi Wellington, New Zealand

Wellington's newest boutique hotel is a charming addition to Cuba Street, one of the coolest precincts in the Kiwi capital. The brief to designers across the Naumi portfolio is 'no white' and here in Wellington this translates to a palette that is eclectic, colourful and wild but all the while refined. The 62 rooms are a heady collision of avocado green, rusty red and turmeric, the walls are draped in sumptuous velvet and the bespoke furniture is from Kiwi start-up Made of Tomorrow. The Lola Rouge restaurant and bar and pastel-hued Parlour cocktail bar continue the vibe. *naumihotels.com*

Gran Hotel Son Net, Mallorca

The sister property of award-winning Andalusian hideaway Finca Cortesin is set to open in the northern hemisphere's spring. Gran Hotel Son Net is near to Palma in the foothills of the World-Heritage-listed Tramuntana Mountains in Mallorca. There will be just 31 suites at the art-filled sanctuary, a former Mallorcan manor house on an estate that dates back to 1672. *sonnet.es*

Also in focus...

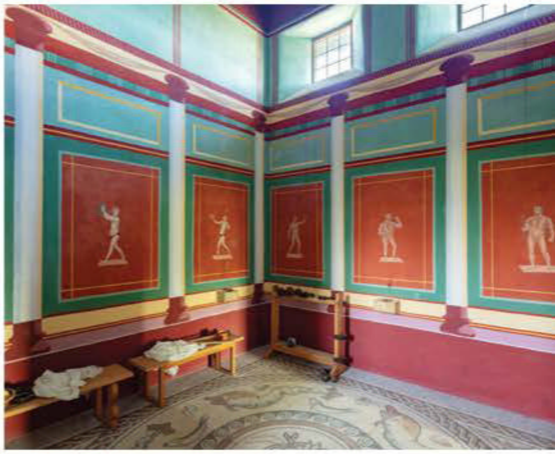
DOUBLE THE FUN
The dual-branded 380-room Moxy Downtown Los Angeles and 347-room AC Hotel Downtown Los Angeles match the fast pace of fashionable DTLA. Both hotels, which are part of the Marriott International brand, offer sweeping views of the city and signature dining and meeting spaces designed to encourage digital nomads and cryptobros to stay and play. *marriott.com*

GREECE LIGHTNING
One&Only Resorts is gearing up to launch its first property in Greece. Expect a touch of mid-century glamour at the One&Only Aesthesis on the Athenian riviera. *oneandonlyresorts.com*

A WEEKEND IN WALES
Bert's is the family farm stay of our dreams. It's the place you'll want to gloat to friends on the 'gram about thanks to the new Shepherd's Hut, which is ideal for families wary of camping in the changeable Welsh weather. It's a dinky little addition to the sprawling eco retreat, which has a kitchen garden restaurant, private beach, rope swings and treehouses. Bert's is located on the Llyn Peninsula in North Wales. There's no wi-fi; this is a place for families to be together. *bertskg.com*

A STORIED HISTORY
Singapore company The Ascott Limited is set to expand its footprint into Asia. A Story Behind Every Door is the concept behind the brand and a thread that will run through each of the hotels. The Robertson House by the Crest Collection (pictured above) will be the first property in the portfolio to launch in 2023 and will hark back to Singapore's history as a bustling trade hub. *discoverasr.com*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *The villa was inspired by ancient Roman excavations; A decorated living room; The gymnasium; The villa boasts a vineyard; The project involved archaeologists, architects, engineers and craftsmen.*



ROMAN REVIVAL

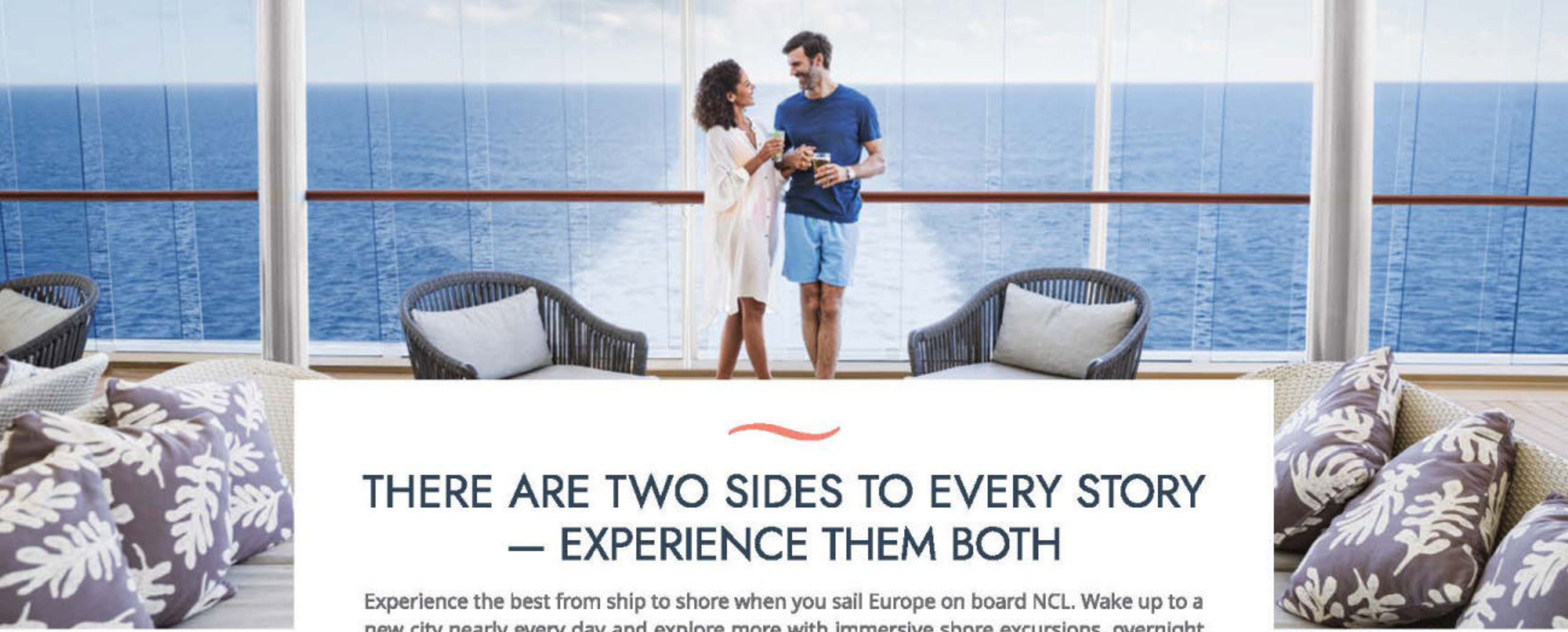
A FAITHFUL REIMAGINING OF A GRAND ROMANO-BRITISH VILLA MIGHT BE THE CLOSEST YOU'LL COME TO TIME TRAVELLING.

The soft and sleepy green folds of the English countryside might not be the first place you'd expect to stumble upon a faithful reconstruction of a Roman villa – in full resplendent scale and colour – but that's exactly what guests at The Newt in Somerset will discover on the grounds when they check in. Launched in June last year, Villa Ventorum (Villa of the Winds) is a historical reimagining of a Romano-British villa inspired and informed by excavations of a settlement found on site that dates to 351 AD, some 60 years before the Romans left Britain after four centuries. It is just under an hour's drive from here to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed city of Bath, which was founded by the Romans as a thermal spa and where visitors can indulge in this legacy today, with a historical tour of the Roman Baths complex and a soak in the city's natural thermal waters at Thermae Bath Spa.

Since opening in 2019, The Newt itself – owned by the South African hoteliers, Koos Bekker and Karen Roos, behind Babylonstoren near Cape Town – has become one of the UK's most coveted country house hotels. And after bedding down in the elegant Georgian surrounds of Hadspen House, roaming rambling gardens and ancient woodland, lunching on garden-fresh fare and sampling estate-made cyder, you can take a tour of Villa Ventorum.

A project in the works for seven years, the villa was brought back to life by a team of archaeologists, architects, engineers and craftspeople who pieced together the story of the historical site; its original foundations are visible today. Ancient Roman construction methods were dutifully employed, including clay dug from the estate for use in the wattle and daub walls, mosaic work and even a hypocaust system – today the only working example of its kind in the world – to provide a network of baths and underfloor heating. The villa seeks to give visitors a taste of what life would have been like on this spot in England's West Country almost 2000 years ago and even includes some authentic Roman-style food and wine to enjoy at the end of a grand tour. *thenewtinsomerset.com* **IT**

WORDS IMOGEN EVESON



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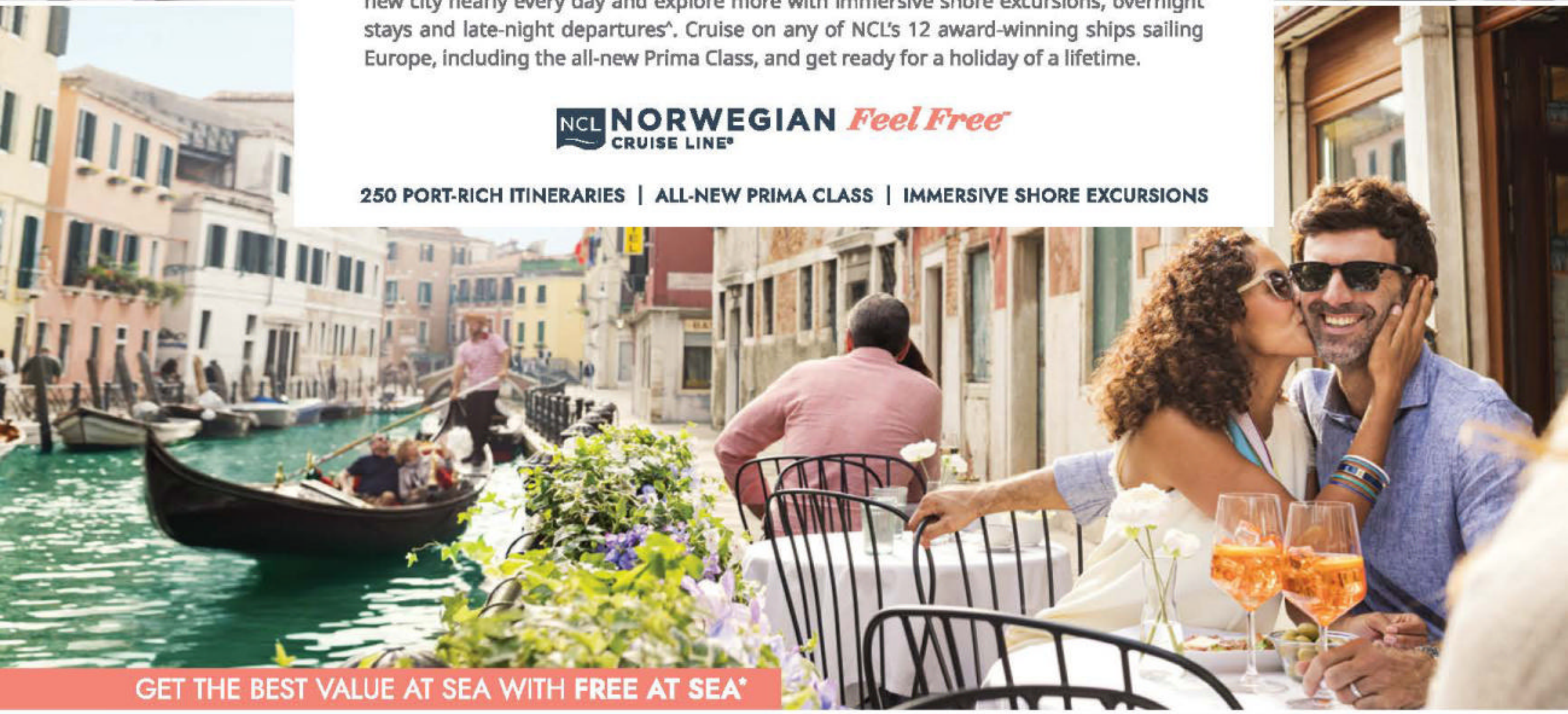

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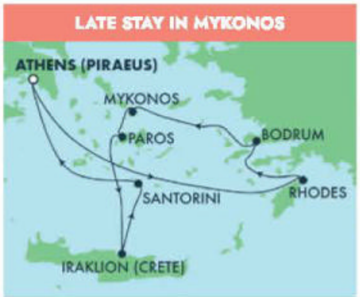
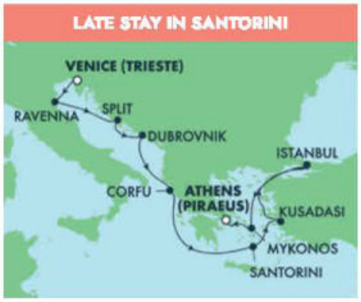
SANTORINI, MYKONOS & RHODES
FROM ATHENS (PIRAEUS)
NORWEGIAN JADE
MAY – OCT 2023

LATE STAY IN MYKONOS


ATHENS (PIRAEUS)
MYKONOS
PAROS
BODRUM
SANTORINI
RHODES
IRAKLION (CRETE)

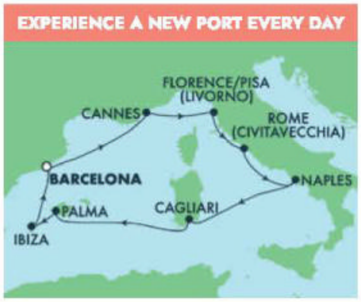
9-DAY GREEK ISLES:
SANTORINI, MYKONOS & CROATIA
FROM VENICE (TRIESTE)
NEW SHIP **NORWEGIAN VIVA**
SEP – OCT 2023, MAY, JUL, AUG & OCT 2024

LATE STAY IN SANTORINI


VENICE (TRIESTE)
RAVENNA
SPLIT
DUBROVNIK
ISTANBUL
CORFU
ATHENS (PIRAEUS)
KUSADASI
MYKONOS
SANTORINI

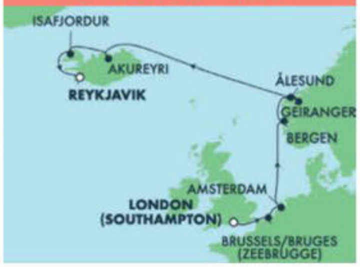
9-DAY MEDITERRANEAN:
ITALY, FRANCE & SPAIN
FROM BARCELONA
NORWEGIAN ESCAPE
MAY – SEP & NOV 2024

EXPERIENCE A NEW PORT EVERY DAY


FLORENCE/PISA (LIVORNO)
CANNES
ROME (CIVITAVECCHIA)
BARCELONA
NAPLES
PALMA
CAGLIARI
IBIZA

11-DAY NORTHERN EUROPE:
ICELAND, NORWAY & BELGIUM
FROM LONDON (SOUTHAMPTON)
NEW SHIP **NORWEGIAN PRIMA**
JUN – AUG 2023, MAY – SEP 2024

LATE STAY IN GEIRANGER


ISAFJORDUR
AKUREYRI
REYKJAVIK
ÅLESUND
GEIRANGER
BERGEN
AMSTERDAM
LONDON (SOUTHAMPTON)
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Star turn

Curtis Stone's Hollywood restaurant Gwen has earned its first Michelin star. Named after Stone's maternal grandmother, it was one of 26 restaurants in LA to be awarded one or more Michelin stars. Practise your swagger. The swanky 62-seat venue, which includes a European-style butchery, is located on Sunset Boulevard in the heart of Hollywood. *gwenla.com*

THE DISH

FROM GARDEN-FRESH CUISINE IN THE MALDIVIAN TREETOPS TO AN OLD-WORLD BUTCHER SHOP WITH A MICHELIN STAR, WE SCOOP UP THE LATEST FROM THE GLOBAL CULINARY SCENE.

TREE CHANGE

Award-winning Brazilian chef Manoella 'Manu' Buffara will be at the helm of Fresh in the Garden at Soneva Fushi in the Maldives until September. The pop-up dining experience is located at the over-the-top treetop restaurant, perched high above the sprawling organic garden at the luxury resort in the Maldives. *soneva.com/resorts/soneva-fushi*

PLANT YOURSELF IN PERU

Bolstering Peru's culinary status as eight-time winner of World Travel Awards' Leading Culinary Destination, chef Matthew Kenney has opened Plant Food + Wine in Lima with Peruvian chef Andre Patsias. Expect innovative seasonal dishes that represent the future of food. *matthewkenneycuisine.com*

Pasta in Piccadilly

Notto Pasta Bar in Piccadilly is now your fastest route to Rome without leaving London. You'll find executive chef Phil Howard (Locanda Locatelli, Pied à Terre, Bancone) demonstrating his prodigious talents at the new eatery, which offers signature dishes such as gnocchetti with smashed sausage, ravioli of osso buco, and pappardelle with slow-cooked oxtail and shin of beef. Please ask your personal trainer to look the other way. *nottopastabar.com*

FOR F.A.W.C.'S SAKE

The biannual F.A.W.C. Food and Wine Classic highlights all that is happening in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. And there's a lot to consume at the festival, from foodie films to chef collaborations, workshops and unique food and wine experiences set in stunning locations. Winter F.A.W.C is held across four weekends in June. *fawc.co.nz*

TRAVEL THROUGH THE GLASS

With Cassandra Charlick

Brunello di Montalcino DOCG

Wine has been a staple of civilisation for centuries. But why the fixation with fermented grape juice? There is no transportive substance like it.

Drink in the rays of Tuscan sunshine, the slope of the hillsides, the ancient soils and the culture of the hands that tended to the vines with just one sip. Next year will be a new vintage, a new moment captured in the bottle.

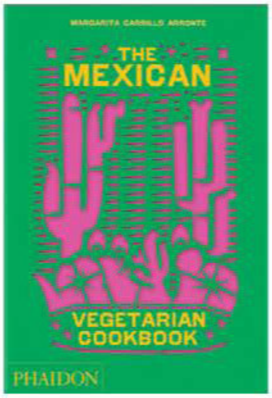
Montalcino might be a tiny medieval hilltop Tuscan town, but it's a powerhouse of the Italian wine world, producing wine since the 16th century. Brunello di Montalcino has the longest ageing requirements of any Italian wine and is made from Sangiovese, Italy's most widely planted grape variety.

Swirl, sniff and sip a heady jumble of red cherry, plum, violets, spice and leather. And that's just the start. Brunello is not a shy wine, so brace yourself for bold flavours, chewy tannins and high acidity. Perfect for pairing with rich game dishes – Tuscan wild boar if you're in situ.

Decoding wine

DOCG – *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* is the highest quality level of Italy's four classifications. Next time you reach for a bottle, look for DOCG on the label for a top-tier vino.

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO



Books for cooks

The Mexican Vegetarian Cookbook by Margarita Carrillo Arronte

This stunning cookbook presents a collection of great vegetarian recipes alongside stories, myths and traditions that celebrate Mexican cuisine. Accompanied by vivid photography throughout, Arronte's ravishing roster of recipes is accessible to cooks of all skill levels. (Phaidon, $74.95; *phaidon.com*).

A TASTE OF JAPAN IN UBUD

Balinese influences have shaped many of the drinks and dishes on the menu at Ambar, a new bar in Ubud that means 'sky' in Sanskrit in a nod to its elevated offering. Located adjacent to the lobby in Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, the new bar also features food and hand-crafted cocktails that sit at a juncture between Japanese and Indonesian traditions. Try the Toro tartare alongside the signature Sunset cocktail. The leafy bar has a tropical feel and the mood is always *bagus. ritzcarlton.com*

History making

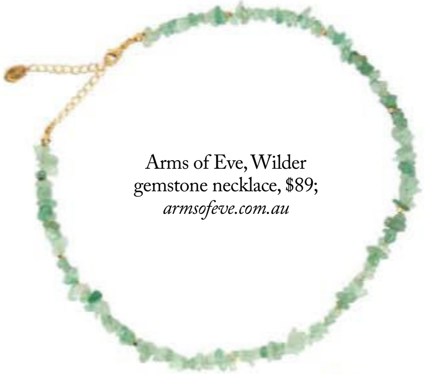
Trace the history of Taiwan, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand over an expertly crafted cocktail at The Bar at 15 Stamford. The new cocktail menu at the bar within The Capitol Kempinski Hotel in Singapore nods to Austronesian migration. Parched travellers should start their journey with the Ilha Formosa 1542, the name Portuguese sailors gave Taiwan in 1542. *kempinski.com/singapore*

LAST DRINKS... The Riviera G&T

Mirabeau's Dry Rosé Gin takes inspiration from the botanicals found along the French Riviera. The result is a first-of-its-kind dry yet highly aromatic style of gin that differs from the sugary pink gins that define this category. Mirabeau stands apart in its use of a grape spirit as its base, which gives a lovely roundness to the blend.

50ml Mirabeau Dry Rosé Gin
150ml Fever Tree Mediterranean Tonic
Sprig of fresh rosemary
Place ice cubes into a goblet and pour over the gin
Add rosemary
Mirabeau Dry Rosé Gin is made in France and available from Dan Murphy's.
maisonmirabeau.com

WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI **PHOTOGRAPHY** CLAY LARSEN (CURTIS STONE); RAY KACHATORIAN (GWEN); SOPHIE BELLARD (MIRABEAU DRY ROSE GIN); COURTESY OF CONTI CONSTANTIWINERY (BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO DOCG WINE BOTTLE); FLORENCE CHARVIN (WINTER F.A.W.C)



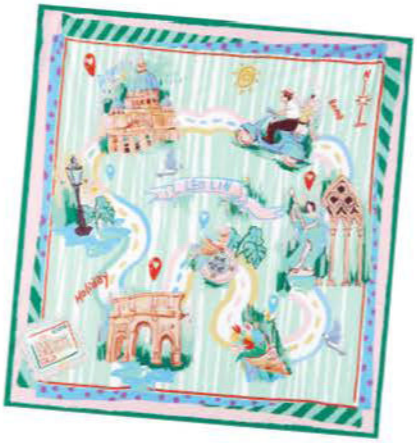
Arms of Eve, Wilder gemstone necklace, $89; *armsofeve.com.au*

Maje, Trompe L'oeil shorts in crepe black, $395; *maje.com.au*

M.A.C Cosmetics, Powder Kiss Velvet Blur Slim Stick in ruby, $44; *maccosmetics.com.au*

Brigid Mclaughlin, Shelly dress, $399; *brigidmclaughlin.com*

Arms of Eve, Shani gold earrings, $89; *armsofeve.com.au*

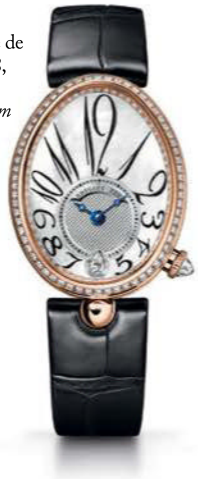


Leo Lin, small silk scarf *Vacanza* print, $279; *leolinofficial.com.au*

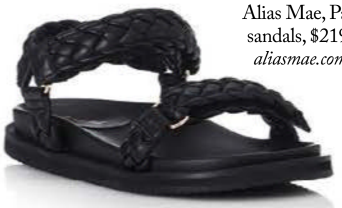
Dress the part

Looking for inspiration for your holiday in the sun? From sandals to sunglasses, find everything you need to look effortlessly stylish on your next great escape.

Brigid Mclaughlin, Tommy tank, $269; *brigidmclaughlin.com*



Breguet, Reine de Naples 8918, $55,800; *watchswiss.com*



Alias Mae, Paisley sandals, $219.95; *aliasmae.com.au*

SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

Breguet wristwatches are where innovation, history and style all collide. Founder and horologist Abraham-Louis Breguet devised the first-ever wristwatch for Napoleon's sister, Caroline, Queen of Naples, from his Parisian workshop in 1810. His inventions (such as the self-winding perpétuelle watch) and exquisite craftmanship have bedazzled royalty across Europe, from Marie Antoinette to Queen Victoria. Today, Breguet watches keep the romanticism of horology (the study of measuring time) alive through traditions that honour the watch master's legacy of encapsulating poetry in clockwork. Such an example is the Reine de Naples collection, which replicates the unique oval face of Caroline Bonaparte's very-own timepiece – a homage to the brand's storied and regal history.

FIVE OF THE BEST: SUNGLASSES

Frame up with stylish shades that deliver a little bit extra.

Raie Eyewear, Bambi Black, $139; *raieeyewear.co*

Camilla, Pool Side Pedigree, $380; *au.camilla.com*

Local Supply, Lis, $110; *localsupply.com*

Dyspnea x Local Supply, Shady Dee in Rosette, $225; *dyspnea.com.au*

Five by Flynn, Deià, $180; *fivebyflynn.com*

PHOTOGRAPHY RICH BEGANY PHOTOGRAPHY (M.A.C. COSMETICS LIPSTICK)

In partnership with Kāʻanapali Beach Hotel

The best things to do in Maui

Set on a stunning sandy beach, built around a tropical garden on the north-west coast of Hawaiʻi's second largest island, Kāʻanapali Beach Hotel is a powerful custodian of Hawaiian culture. It's not surprising that the hotel's staff provide excellent insider tips on things to try in Maui.

1

OCEAN ACTIVITIES CENTER

Kāʻanapali Beach Hotel's Moanakuʻinamoku Ocean Activities Center offers adventures for the whole family, such as stand-up paddleboarding lessons and snorkelling tours to Puʻu Kekaʻa (Black Rock), a spot revered in Hawaiian culture as a place where the spirits leapt from this world to the next. The beach is one of the best locations to watch the annual humpback whale migration from December to April, while seeing green sea turtles is a year-round highlight.

2

Kawenaokeao Cultural Center

THE HOTEL'S KAWENAOKEAO CULTURAL CENTER HOSTS A WIDE RANGE OF COMPLIMENTARY HAWAIIAN CULTURAL OFFERINGS. ENJOY A HULA OR LEI-MAKING LESSON, AN INTRODUCTION TO HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE AND MUSIC, OR A STORYTELLING SESSION THAT SHARES HAWAIIAN VALUES AND TRADITIONS.

3

OLD LĀHAINĀ LŪʻAU

The open-air beachside Old Lāhainā Lūʻau is Hawaiʻi's most authentic sunset lūʻau feast and hula performance. As the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the early 19th century, it's now on the National Register of Historic Places.

4

OUTRIGGER CANOES

Take an outrigger canoe tour with ALIʻI MAUI OUTRIGGER CANOES minutes from the hotel. Your guide will share stories about Hawaiʻi's longstanding paddling culture and sailing navigation by the stars.

5

Snorkelling and sailing

TRIOLOGY, Maui's oldest sailboat company, offers a broad array of sailing and snorkelling options, including trips around Kāʻanapali Beach and to the crescent-shaped Molokini crater, a state marine life and bird conservation district. They also have sunset sailing and whale watching trips.

6

EXPLORE UPCOUNTRY

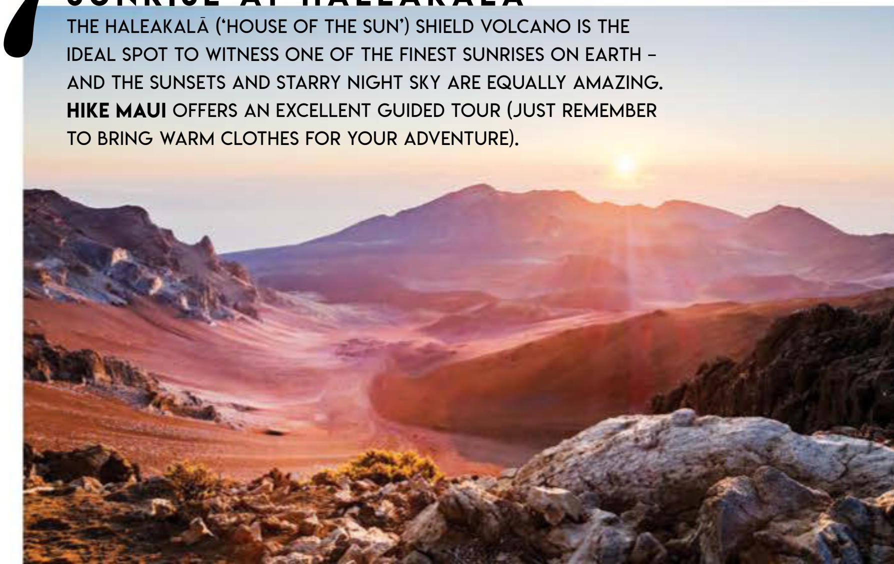
Explore the cowboy town-turned-art-village of Makawao, visit the Saturday morning Upcountry Farmers Market in Kula Malu Town Center, and ride horses with real Hawaiian cowboys at THOMSON RANCH and TRIPLE L RANCH.

Plan your Hawaiian holiday at kbhmaui.com

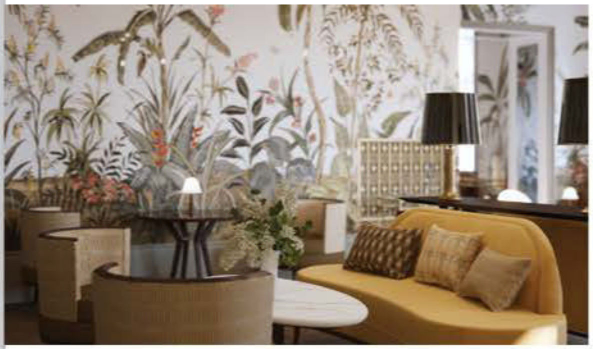
7

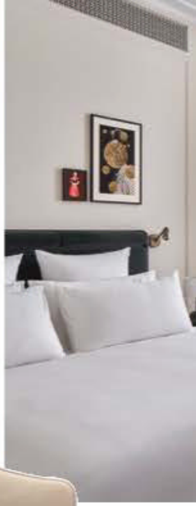
SUNRISE AT HALEAKALĀ

THE HALEAKALĀ ('HOUSE OF THE SUN') SHIELD VOLCANO IS THE IDEAL SPOT TO WITNESS ONE OF THE FINEST SUNRISES ON EARTH – AND THE SUNSETS AND STARRY NIGHT SKY ARE EQUALLY AMAZING. **HIKE MAUI** OFFERS AN EXCELLENT GUIDED TOUR (JUST REMEMBER TO BRING WARM CLOTHES FOR YOUR ADVENTURE).



WORDS SUSAN GOUGH HENLY **PHOTOGRAPHY** HAWAIʻI TOURISM AUTHORITY (OUTRIGGER CANOES); TOR JOHNSON (MAKAWAO)





Hotel to home

ROSEWOOD VIENNA

YOU CAN BANK ON A LUXURY STAY IN THE AUSTRIAN CAPITAL IN THIS CHIC HOTEL, WHICH CELEBRATES THE CITY'S GOLDEN AGE.

WHERE IT IS

Peterplatz in Vienna's Old Town, housed inside a refurbished 19th-century bank. The building also contained an apartment where Mozart once lived and composed *The Abduction from the Seraglio.*

WHY WE LOVE IT

In line with the neighbourhood and grand legacy of the building, the Rosewood Vienna – opened last August – oozes opulence. With a subtle nod to the imperial glamour of the city's past, the hotel artfully pulls together an elegant interior with flourishes of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. It's dapperly dressed in clean neutrals with pops of gold, navy and burnt orange. And a stay here is guaranteed to make you feel like a socialite living through the resplendence of Vienna's golden era.

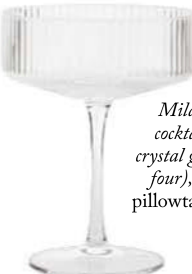
WHAT TO BORROW

Keep the furnishings streamlined and add a dash of decadence with small details. It's all in the textures – crystal-cut glassware, marble surfaces and brandishes of rich colour to fuse sumptuous antique flair with modern luxe. *rosewoodhotels.com*

Charlotte armchair, $3039; boconcept.com

Wildflowers of Australia *print, $55;* eloiseshort.com

Fin Bookends small, $385; henrywilson.com.au



Mila ribbed cocktail coupe crystal glass (set of four), $59.95; pillowtalk.com.au

WORDS ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD **PHOTOGRAPHY** JASON INGRAM (MUSEO CHILLIDA LEKU), BOCONCEPT (CHARLOTTE ARMCHAIR), PILLOW TALK (MILA GLASS), @NIKI_SCHUCH_PHOTOGRAPHER/@SAMAMORE.CREATIVE (RILEY CUSHION) **ARTWORKS** EGON SCHIELE *(DR. FRANZ MARTIN HABERDITZL)*, 1917

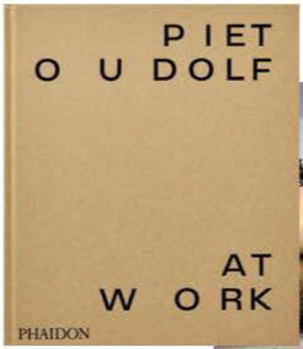
Like a local

The Belvedere. 300 Years a Place of Art is the anniversary exhibition you don't want to miss, with displays featuring Austrian art juggernauts such as Klimt, Schiele and von Amerling. While you're visiting, the Belvedere's Wolfgang Bergman has some insider tips on seeing the rest of Vienna like a local – including a stop at the Belvedere 21. A lauded example of post-war modernism, this contemporary art counterpart to the Belvedere is located across the museum's Baroque gardens. Bergman recommends the nearby Café Goldegg if you get peckish en route. "It opened in 1910 and gives you an authentic feel of a Viennese coffeehouse," he says. Keen to get off the beaten path? Visit Wotrubakirche on the city's outskirts – another icon of modern architecture. *belvedere.at*

Coquette table lamp, $1584; montauklightingco.com

Maison Balzac LouLou vase in mint, $129; maisonbalzac.com

RILEY navy linen cushion, $99.95; ivory.madraslink.com.au



Perennial favourites

WANDER THE SPELLBINDING GARDENS OF PIET OUDOLF

Wabi-Sabi is the Japanese principle of embracing transience and imperfection in aesthetics. It's a philosophy that seems to sit at the heart of Perennial Landscaping, a school of gardening spearheaded by Dutch landscaper and visionary, Piet Oudolf.

Perennial Landscaping prioritises the look of plants throughout all stages of life – not just when they're in bloom. Oudolf draws upon oft-overlooked details such as form, leaf and pod shape to craft gardens that evolve and transform with the seasons. Even in senescence, the vegetation comes alive as part of his dynamic and ever-changing designs.

Piet Oudolf: At Work (Phaidon, $120) is a monograph on the landscaper's career, transporting readers into Oudolf's creative world where art and horticulture intersect. In celebration of the book's release, here are five of his iconic gardens that can be visited. *phaidon.com*

OUDOLF FIELD AT HAUSER & WIRTH SOMERSET, UK

This enchanting garden (pictured above) at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, a contemporary art gallery occupying a former farmstead, highlights Piet Oudolf's distinctive style of planting circular plots, where gently contrasting plant textures softly tessellate together. The result is a gardenscape that blankets the gallery grounds like a botanical patchwork quilt, remaining as expressive in the winter months as it is in the summer.

MUSEO CHILLIDA LEKU, SPAIN

This museum in northern Spain is dedicated to the works of Basque artist Eduardo Chillida. Oudolf sets the stage for 40 of Chillida's steel and concrete abstract sculptures. The gardens (pictured below) incorporate azaleas, magnolias, dogwoods, lilacs and riesenschirm – a type of perennial popular with butterflies.

NOMA, DENMARK

Noma has carved out a reputation as one of the world's best and most innovative restaurants, and enjoying a post-meal stroll through Noma's gardens is a quintessential part of the dining experience. But the beloved Copenhagen cornerstone is set to shut its doors in 2024, so now is the time to nab a booking.

MAXIMILIAN PARK, GERMANY

Maximillian Park came about as part of an initiative to regenerate industrial sites. Here, Oudolf creates a sporadic rhythm with small clusters of perennials and grasses planted in blocks, interspersed with winding walking trails. It's a spellbinding composition that transforms this former coal mine into a beloved public space in the city of Hamm.

HIGH LINE, USA

Oudolf's best-known work, the High Line in New York City, contrasts the urban environment of West Manhattan with native plants and perennials. The elevated track, once a railroad spur, now stands transformed with a rich variety of vegetation. The shrubs and small trees form a lush oasis that stretches through the heart of one of the world's busiest cities and provides pockets of shade.

The design dispatch

Romance *of the* Rails

EDWINA HART ON HER LOVE AFFAIR WITH RAILWAY JOURNEYS AND THEIR MODERN-DAY RENAISSANCE AS THE NEXT BIG THING IN SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL.

I've always romanticised railway journeys. I wouldn't exist if it weren't for my parents meeting on a snowed-in Swiss train in the winter of 1982. Severe weather conditions meant the trip from Lausanne to London was derailed, forcing passengers to alight in Paris, where my parents spent a few magical hours running around the City of Love. Who wouldn't fall head over heels? It's basically the script from Richard Linklater's cult 1995 film *Before Sunrise*.

I was seduced by the charms of train travel in my twenties: the slow, meandering pace; the cinematic scenery unfolding outside my window; the rhythmic sound of the wheels rattling along the track as I drifted off to sleep. I was enamoured with sumptuous Pullman-style carriages that transported me back to the 'Golden Age' of train travel and the cast of characters worthy of an Agatha Christie mystery who'd mingle over G&Ts in the bar car. At that time, luxury locomotives weren't particularly fashionable; they were primarily the domain of retired British men with a penchant for pastel-hued preppy blazers and smoking cigars on the observation deck.

Lately, there's a renewed interest in train travel – it's a modern-day renaissance. We are in the era of *flygskam* (flight shame): a Swedish neologism that's taken off. If jet-setting is passé, riding the rails is de rigueur. The latest Scandi buzzword to enter our lexicon is *tågskryt* (train bragging) – showing off your low-carbon footprint on social media. Pinterest – the virtual mood board widely utilised by design lovers – released an end-of-year report with predictions for emerging trends for 2023. The search for Pinterest pins for 'train trip aesthetic' increased by 205 per cent from September 2020 to September 2022. Gen Z and my fellow millennials are now well and truly onboard.

As a result of this growing movement towards sustainable travel, premium train operators are capitalising on the newfound enthusiasm for a mode of transportation considered outdated. These top-tier trains give passengers something to brag about – deluxe cabins with en suite bathrooms, lavishly appointed dining carriages that serve multi-course meals with silver service, onboard spas and 24-hour butler service.

Belmond has been the bastion of glamorous, old-world train travel for decades, commanding stylishly restored vintage trains that make tracks across Europe, Asia and South America. Renowned American travel writer Paul Theroux once said: "I have seldom heard a train go by and not wished I was on it." I have not heard of a Belmond train I haven't wished I was on. The legendary *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express* is the epitome of elegance with Art Deco carriages and a restaurant car adorned with original René Lalique glass. Handcrafted 1920s Grand Suites are the latest chapter of this storied train; these recent additions make the classic voyage from London to Venice even more extravagant.

I always find myself marvelling at the thoughtful design details that reflect the route of each of Belmond's sleepers: cherrywood panelling and Jim Thompson Thai silks on the *Eastern & Oriental Express*, which breezes through jungles in Southeast Asia; the *Royal Scotsman*'s mahogany-clad interiors and tartan fabrics; and vibrant Peruvian textiles, earthy tones and alpaca wool on the contemporary-style *Andean Explorer* that weaves towards Lake Titicaca.

Wes Anderson fans will delight in the *British Pullman* that departs from London Victoria Station. In 2021, Belmond enlisted the famous film director to makeover one of the 1950s-era parlour cars with his signature whimsical flair. However, there's no better way to experience a real-life immersion in a Wes Anderson fantasy than onboard *Maharajas' Express*. My eight-day Indian Splendour odyssey around Rajasthan was just the ticket – a riot of colour straight out of *The Darjeeling Limited*.

PHOTOGRAPHY EDWINA HART (*MAHARAJAS' EXPRESS*, VIEW FROM OBSERVATION DECK, *EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS*, *EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS* DINING CARRIAGE); DIMORE STUDIO (*ORIENT EXPRESS LA DOLCE VITA*), MAXIME D'ANGEAC AND MARTIN DARZACQ (*ACCOR ORIENT EXPRESS*); REPUBLIC OF FLORENCE (NARDI DUFFLE BAG)

I'm thrilled that the train travel trend shows no signs of slowing down. French hospitality group Accor unveiled their latest venture – a spare-no-expense iteration of the iconic *Orient Express* reimagined by French architect Maxime d'Angeac (known for his work with Hermès). And I'm counting down the days until it rolls out in early 2025 with a fleet of fabulously retrofitted cars with Roaring Twenties appeal. Meanwhile, the *Orient Express La Dolce Vita* – with a retro Italian twist – celebrates the craftsmanship and creativity of 1960s Italian design. The sun-drenched itineraries through Italy commence in 2024. So sign me up for the Sicilian sojourn and hand me an Aperol spritz.

But first, my love affair with trains continues as I set off on my next railroad adventure on the *Rocky Mountaineer* – where we'll wind through a winter wonderland of the snow-capped Canadian Rockies. Trends may come and go, but when it comes to train travel, we're full steam ahead for a more stylish and sustainable future. **IT**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Peek inside the Presidential Suite onboard Accor's new* Orient Express*; A journey into luxury with* Orient Express La Dolce Vita*; Expect silver service onboard* Maharajas' Express*; Find a retro Italian twist onboard* Orient Express La Dolce Vita*; Enjoy dinner with a view on the* Eastern & Oriental Express*; Move to the observation deck to catch the sunset.*

PACK YOUR BAGS

Prepare for equal parts style and adventure on a journey that evokes the golden age of rail travel.

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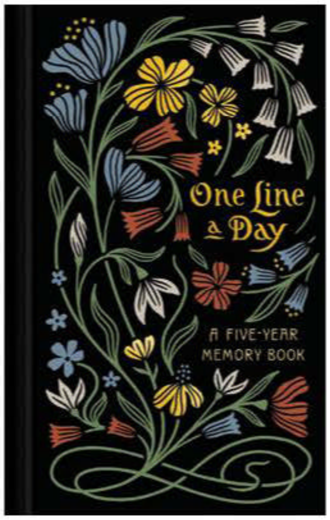
HALF FRAME CAMERA
Kodak

Capture golden moments in vintage fashion with a Kodak **EKTAR H35 HALF FRAME FILM CAMERA** in sand, $99.95; *camerahouse.com.au*

Watch the world whiz by wrapped up in Marimekko's **IHASTUTTAVA SCARF** in Albatrossi pattern, $235; *marimekko.com*



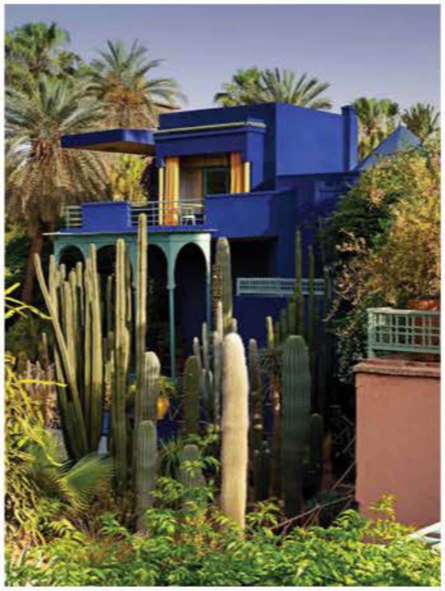
Keep this **NOUVEAU ONE LINE A DAY** five-year memory book close to hand to journal your journey, $34.99; *hardiegrant.com*

Pack for style and utility with Republic of Florence's **SMALL NARDI LEATHER DUFFLE BAG** in brown, $329; *republicofflorence.com.au*

Aēsop
RÆBURN

Stay fragrant, hydrated and ready for anything with Aesop's **ADVENTURER ROLL UP**, $70; *aesop.com*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Yves Saint Laurent in Marrakech; Dar Es Saada, the first home of Bergé and Saint Laurent near Jardin Marjorelle; Cacti in Jardin Majorelle; The YSL Museum; Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé bought and restored Jardin Majorelle in 1980.*



An Artist's Oasis

MARRAKECH'S JARDIN MAJORELLE CELEBRATES 100 YEARS SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT. THE ICONIC GARDEN INTERWEAVES THE HISTORIES OF TWO FRENCH VISIONARIES, PAINTER AND LANDSCAPER JACQUES MAJORELLE AND CELEBRATED DESIGNER YVES SAINT LAURENT.

"A certain blue enters your soul," once remarked Henri Matisse. That's certainly the effect in Jardin Majorelle, where all of the architectural features, from the villa to the water fountain, are painted in a bright ultramarine shade akin to the one used in Matisse's *Blue Ladies*. It's a fresh and intense hue that seems to rush forward and pervade the air, serving as the backdrop for the garden's verdant collection of otherworldly plants. However, the exact shade used, Majorelle Blue, is trademarked by the garden's namesake designer, French-born Jacques Majorelle.

Majorelle first came to Marrakech as a young painter and like many of his contemporaries, fell in love with the vibrant colours and rich light of the city. He relocated permanently, drawing inspiration from his surroundings where souks, kasbahs and the people of Morocco often constituted the subjects of his paintings.

But Majorelle's finest work would be the construction of the garden grounds on the property where he lived, which he founded in 1923 and landscaped over the course of 40 years. He commissioned the construction of a Cubist villa on the premises, which remains an outstanding relic of '30s Art Deco architecture today. A keen botanist, Majorelle filled the garden with rare plants from all around the world. He planted and cultivated bamboo groves, jasmine bushes, water lilies, lofty cacti and more, all intentionally placed to create dramatic effects with shadow and light.

In 1962, Majorelle returned to Paris for medical treatment following a car accident and passed away that year. At the same time, a young Yves Saint Laurent was making waves in the city's fashion scene and beyond.

Algerian-born Yves Saint Laurent moved to Paris as a teenager. There, he began his design career and garnered a reputation for his unique brand of sleek and innovative minimalism. Notably, Saint Laurent created the first tuxedo for women ('le smoking' suit), pioneering an androgynous look that both empowered and scandalised.

But it was a visit to Marrakech with his life partner Pierre Bergé in 1966 that marked Saint Laurent's return to his North African roots. Like Majorelle, the pair were so taken with the splendours of the city that they purchased a home in Marrakech the very same year. Saint Laurent began sojourning to Morocco biannually to design his collections, which also began to take on the colours and vibrance of North Africa. "For many years, Jardin Majorelle has provided me with an endless source of inspiration, and I have often dreamt of its unique colours," the designer once remarked.

When a development plan threatened Jardin Majorelle in 1980, Saint Laurent and Bergé purchased it to keep the original vision alive, moving into the villa and meticulously restoring the structure and gardens.

The pair shared a true passion for the country that shaped much of their lives. Over the years, they collected art, artefacts and jewellery crafted by the Indigenous Moroccan Berber people, which Bergé later bequeathed to the Museum of Berber Art housed within the Majorelle villa.

Yves Saint Laurent passed away in 2008, and his ashes were scattered among the gardens that inspired so much of his life and work. In 2017, The Yves Saint Laurent Museum opened adjacent to the Majorelle Garden grounds, honouring the designer's legacy through a display of sketches, photos, garments and personal items. The museum also contains a hall dedicated to the paintings of Jacques Majorelle. As Bergé commented, "It was natural to build a museum dedicated to the work of Yves Saint Laurent in Morocco, as he – even in the colours and the forms of his clothing – owes so much to the country."

jardinmajorelle.com **IT**

WORDS ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD **PHOTOGRAPHY** GUY MARINEAU (BOTH PHOTOS OF YVES SAINT LAURENT, DAR ES SAADA), NICOLAS MATHÉUS (JARDIN MAJORELLE, YSL MUSEUM)

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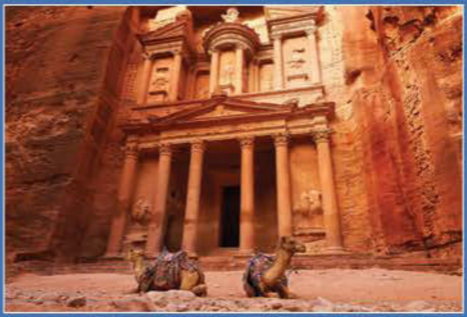

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POSTCARDS

ANCHORED IN THE SCENERY

Seafood connoisseurs can find Brice Cachia prising oysters out of their pearlescent shells and serving them alongside lobsters, sea bream, prawns and langoustines at Les Perles de Monte-Carlo. The marine biologist's sustainable oyster farm and bar, which you'll find on the pier in Port de Fontvieille against a magical Riviera backdrop, is one of Monaco's true hidden gems. Turn to page 46 for more.

PHOTOGRAPHY ©LES PERLES DE MONTE-CARLO

48 hours in BANGKOK

WHEN IT COMES TO THE WORLD'S MOST VISITED CITIES, BANGKOK REGULARLY RETAINS THE NUMBER ONE SPOT, ATTRACTING 22.78 MILLION INTERNATIONAL VISITORS LAST YEAR WITH ITS BUSTLING STREET MARKETS, COLOURFUL CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS AND A TOP-NOTCH DINING SCENE. **BONITA GRIMA** REVEALS IN TWO DAYS WHY YOU TOO SHOULD PLACE THAILAND'S 'CITY OF ANGELS' AT THE TOP OF YOUR 2023 TRAVEL LIST.

DAY ONE

8AM: After a restful night's sleep at **COMO METROPOLITAN BANGKOK** and an energising in-house yoga session, choose from the hotel restaurant's Shambhala Spa-inspired breakfast menu while overlooking the pool. Alternatively, step out onto the streets of Sathorn and walk a few blocks to **TOBY'S AT SALADAENG**. Tucked down a quiet business district laneway, this attractive Australian-inspired cafe is the latest of the owner's three modern offerings in the city, and its Aussie breakfast classics peppered with Thai flavour will transport your tastebuds across the Asia Pacific. Pair a flat white or lean green juice with the prawn toast – topped with fried eggs, grilled prawns and lotus root served with black sesame sweet plum sauce, it's the hearty start you need to tackle the busy streets.

9.30AM: Cross the highway and stroll through one of the city's loveliest parks en route to **SILOM** metro station. Known as the 'Central Park' of Bangkok, **LUMPINI PARK** is an oasis of green where you'll find locals practising tai chi, making Buddhist offerings and taking to the lake in swan-shaped paddle boats.

10.30AM: After catching the subway to **SANAM CHAI**, exit the station in the historic centre of the city and walk to Bangkok's number one attraction, the **GRAND PALACE**. Rehomed here in 1792, the official residence of the King of Thailand is also home to the country's most sacred Buddhist temple, the **TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA**. Save time by buying tickets online, ensuring you are appropriately dressed, and taking a tour with a local guide.

12PM: Next, walk a few blocks to **WAT PHO**. The Temple of the Reclining Buddha is one of Bangkok's oldest and most visited temples. Aside from housing an impressive 46-metre-long golden Buddha, it also holds the ashes of King Rama I who restored the temple complex in 1788. Considered Thailand's earliest centre for public education, Wat Pho was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World program in 2008 for its ancient marble inscriptions, including those about

PHOTOGRAPHY TAYLOR SIMPSON (WAT PHO); RUTPRATHEEP NILPECHR (GRAND PALACE STATUE); JACK HUNTER (WAT PHO DETAIL)

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Thailand's tallest skyscraper, King Power Mahanakhon; One of the many gilded statues at the Grand Palace; Vertigo and Moon Bar at Banyan Tree.* **OPPOSITE** (from top left): *COMO Metropolitan Bangkok's pool; Wat Pho, Temple of the Reclining Buddha.*

Thai medicine and massage. As the birthplace of Thai massage, a treatment at the temple's massage school is a must.

1.30PM: By now you'll be ready for lunch. Take a traditional long boat or express ferry from nearby **THA CHANG PIER** and cruise down the **CHAO PHRAYA RIVER** to one of Bangkok's newest luxury shopping centres, **ICONSIAM**.

2PM: Positioned on the west bank and ranked among the top four shopping centres in the world in 2021, ICONSIAM is one of the largest malls in Asia, with more than 7000 global brands and 100 restaurants. Spread over multiple levels and seven different dining zones, eating options range from Michelin-star restaurants such as **BLUE BY ALAIN DUCASSE**, to street food stalls within the world's only indoor floating market – showcasing dishes from Thailand's 77 provinces. Before you go, grab a drink at **TASANA NAKORN TERRACE** for spectacular riverfront views.

4PM: Speaking of views, catch ICONSIAM's free shuttle boat to **SATHORN PIER** before connecting via the BTS Skytrain to Bangkok's newest skyscraper and Thailand's tallest building, **KING POWER MAHANAKHON**. Head straight to the top for the **MAHANAKHON SKYWALK** – an experience that includes walking over a glass tray on the 78th floor and 360-degree views from the **OBSERVATION DECK** at the Peak, 314 metres above ground level.

5.30PM: By now you'll want to head back to COMO Metropolitan Bangkok for a well-earned rest. Relax with a luxurious treatment at **COMO SHAMBHALA SPA**, a signature cocktail by the pool or power nap back in your room.

8PM: After freshening up, sit down to dinner at **NAHM**. Consistently ranked among the best restaurants in Asia since its opening by renowned chef David Thompson in 2010, the restaurant at COMO Metropolitan Bangkok has retained its Michelin star for six years running, with Pim Techamuanvivit now at the helm. Opt for the Heritage degustation with matching wines to experience a modern, fine-dining take on traditional Thai fare.

9.30PM: Bangkok is known for its rooftop bars. Stroll next door to **BANYAN TREE** and take the lift to the hotel's **VERTIGO AND MOON BAR** to experience one of its best. Located on the 61st floor, the cocktail bar is the perfect place to drink in the bright lights of the city and see King Power Mahanakhon from a different perspective, right in front of you.

10.30PM: If you've still got energy to burn, head to **CHINATOWN** for late-night bar-hopping. Popular with a young, hip crowd, **SOI NANA** is the best laneway to explore with cute and compact speakeasy-style cocktail bars including **ASIA TODAY**, **TEP BAR**, **WALLFLOWERS** and **TEENS OF THAILAND** – with the latter regularly ranking among Asia's 50 Best Bars.

DAY TWO

8AM: After breakfast, catch a tuk tuk to nearby **BENCHAKITTI FOREST PARK** for a morning stroll along the park's newly opened **SKYWALK**. Running almost two kilometres, the raised walkway is thought to be one of the world's longest. Set within 48 hectares of land formerly belonging to the Tobacco Authority of Thailand, the newly converted and expanded wetlands now make Benchakitti Forest Park the largest of its kind in the city.

9.30AM: For one of the city's cultural treasures, make your way to **JIM THOMPSON HOUSE MUSEUM** to visit the Bangkok home and Asian art collection of the man >>

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *BKK Social Club was voted the 10th best bar in Asia; The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre's design has been likened to New York's Guggenheim Museum; Pull up a table at Jodd Fairs night market to feast on local street food in a buzzing atmosphere.*

responsible for reviving Thailand's silk industry. Book ahead for a guided tour of the six traditional teak weavers' cottages that make up the late American entrepreneur's home. Stop at the museum shop on your way out for luxury silk clothing and textiles.

11AM: Walk around the corner to **SIAM SQUARE** to see the **BANGKOK ART AND CULTURE CENTRE (BACC)**. Worth a visit for its architecture alone, the centre's circular atrium design is likened to New York's Guggenheim Museum. Host to contemporary events, activities and exhibitions from some of the best Thai and international artists, BACC is also a regular venue for the Bangkok Art Biennale. Take time to browse artisan shops also located here.

12.30PM: Catch the BTS Skytrain to **SAPHAN TAKSIN** to explore Bangkok's newest creative district. **CHAROENKRUNG ROAD** is the city's oldest road and along it you'll find an array of hipster galleries, design stores, cafes and excellent eateries such as **SAMLOR**. The popular comfort food restaurant is the latest venture of Napol Jantraget and Saki Hoshino – the power couple chefs who formerly owned Michelin star restaurant **80/20**, also found here. After lunch, visit **THAILAND CREATIVE DESIGN CENTRE** and slip down side streets known as *sois* for colourful street art and hidden bars.

2PM: Walk from Charoenkrung to nearby **MANDARIN ORIENTAL** to try the high-end hotel's latest spa treatment, the Cannabis Relax and Restore Massage. With cannabis now decriminalised in Thailand, it's the perfect time to experience the therapeutic effects of the plant with a luxury treatment that includes CBD-infused massage oil and cannabis poultice combined with medicinal Thai herbs. Pre-book and arrive early for the included river boat crossing from the hotel to **THE ORIENT SPA**, located on the opposite side of the Chao Phraya. Alternatively, head back to COMO Metropolitan Bangkok for a Thai massage and dip in the hotel pool.

5PM: Feeling refreshed, walk around the corner from the hotel to **THE COMMONS**. Filled with eateries, bars, fitness studios and an event space, this modern multi-level hub in **SALADAENG** is one of two in the city, designed with community in mind. Get social and grab a drink here before taking the metro to **RAMA 9** for dinner.

6.30PM: While Chatuchak Market is Bangkok's biggest marketplace, **JODD FAIRS** is its newest, popular with visitors and locals alike. Wander the night market's fairy-lit aisles to shop for creative wares, clothing and street food with a twist like cheese-flavoured ice-cream, quail egg skewers topped with bacon, matcha green tea macarons and the local favourite, *leng saeb* – a mountain of spicy pork served in a tasty broth. Of course, more traditional fare can be found here too, including delicious seafood delicacies.

8.30PM: For your last spin in the city, feel the wind in your hair by taking a tuk tuk to **BKK SOCIAL CLUB**. Coming in at number 10 at Asia's 50 Best Bar Awards last year and crowned Thailand's best, the cocktail bar within the **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BANGKOK AT CHAO PHRAYA RIVER** is inspired by the glamour of Buenos Aires, with its parallels to Bangkok. Settle into a plush private booth beneath the greenery and chandeliers in the indoor-outdoor space, and soak up the sublime selection of upbeat music and bespoke cocktails. Want more? End your night on a high at one of the city's newest rooftop bars, **THE LOFT** at **WALDORF ASTORIA**. The bohemian, New York-style Art Nouveau bar located on the 57th floor serves the forgotten cocktails of the original 1953 Waldorf Astoria Bar Book. **IT**

PHOTOGRAPHY KEN SEET (BKK SOCIAL CLUB)

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Shifting sands

BALI'S TOURISM MINISTRY IS NOW ENCOURAGING VISITORS TO DITCH 'SUN, SEA AND SAND' FOR 'SERENITY, SPIRITUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY'. HERE'S WHERE TO FIND IT WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR HOTEL, WRITES **SARAH REID.**

Lying in bed watching fireflies flit past your villa, tucking into flavour-packed feasts driven by the onsite permaculture garden and connecting with local culture on a deeper level… this is what eco-luxury lodging looks like in Bali in 2023. And we're here for it.

Returning visitors will notice a sustainable shift in the Bali experience, with zero-waste eateries and ethical boutiques now popping up across the island, along with hotels embracing not only a more holistic approach to sustainability, but also a regenerative one.

"We wanted to create something where we could confidently say, because of us, things are getting better around us," says Aska Hamakawa, co-founder of Mana Earthly Paradise – an Ubud eco retreat that in 2022 became Southeast Asia's first hospitality B Corp. "Bali has so much potential to be an example to the world, and I hope in the coming years we'll start to see more effort from every sector to make tourism more sustainable," she adds.

Here are five of Bali's newest hotels following Mana's positive-impact lead.

PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT RIEGER (LOST LINDENBERG); MARTIN WESTLAKE (POTATO HEAD SUITES)

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Jungle meets ocean at Lost Lindenberg; Kaum Bar is part of Potato Head's 'eco village'; Local seafood is a hero at Potato Head; The village's Waste Lab hosts eco workshops; Lost Lindenberg's lush gardens.* **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left): *Ocean views from Potato Head Suites; Lost Lindenberg's treehouse-style rooms; The retreat deals in minimalist-chic.*

LOST LINDENBERG, WEST BALI

Follow the coastal road northwest of Canggu and the concrete jungle soon gives way to a patchwork of lurid rice paddies and spindly coconut palms that stir memories of a Bali before the beach clubs arrived. Putting a sustainable spin on the utopian fantasy with eight treehouse-style rooms floating above a rewilded jungle property is Lost Lindenberg. One of just two Bali retreats in Small Luxury Hotels of the World's Considerate Collection (*slh.com/considerate*) recognising actively sustainable accommodations, this minimalist-chic eco lodge feels like a natural extension of the local village of Pekutatan. Community is, indeed, at the heart of Lost Lindenberg. Heavily involved in the lodge's design process, locals now hold meaningful staff positions and host local tours, with the wider community regularly invited to events ranging from surfing competitions to barbecues on the property's black-sand beach.

Made for social travellers, Lost Lindenberg guests are encouraged to embrace the lodge's collective concept and mingle with fellow holidaymakers in common spaces including the elegantly understated dining room, where wholesome plant-based meals are served at a communal, sustainably sourced wooden table. Solitude can be savoured at the rustic spa, with e-bikes and e-scooters available for exploring further afield. *thelindenberg.com*

POTATO HEAD SUITES, SEMINYAK

Potato Head has evolved into one of the island's most innovative hospitality businesses since arriving on the scene in 2010 as one of Bali's first beach clubs. Its 2022 reincarnation of the Brutalist-chic Katamama Hotel furnished this 'eco village' with 58 artisan-led suites.

The brand's sustainability journey began in 2016 when its Indonesian entrepreneur owner Ronald Akili found himself surfing in knee-deep plastic. Exploring creative ways to morph waste into stylish and useful objects is now a key focus at the onsite Waste Lab, which hosts free sustainability workshops (open to non-guests). After a few days padding around your traditional terracotta-tiled suite in biodegradable coconut husk and palm leaf slippers and exploring the local area toting your complimentary zero-waste kit, it's easy to forget plastic ever existed. And if you're flirting with vegetarianism, Australian chef Dominique Hammond's plant-based degustation at onsite restaurant Tanaman might just seal the deal.

Also housing 168 studios alongside a slew of wellness, music and gallery spaces, Desa Potato Head was Asia's first hospitality company to be certified carbon-neutral in 2017. With the brand now focusing on more impactful strategies to prevent emissions (rather than simply offset them) such as mangrove-planting projects, its 'good times, do good' philosophy has never felt more apt. *seminyak.potatohead.co* >>

BUAHAN – A BANYAN TREE ESCAPE, UBUD

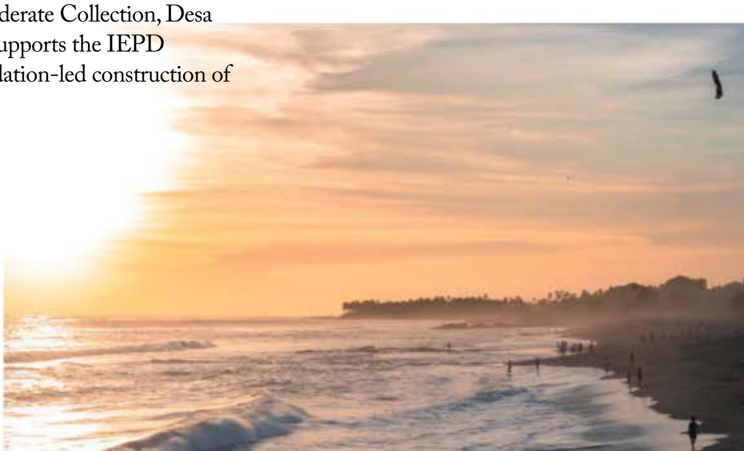
Who needs Netflix when you can watch fireflies dance on the tropical breeze as you drift off to sleep? Certainly not at Buahan – A Banyan Tree Escape, which reinvented the luxury hotel concept with its 'no walls, no doors' idea carried throughout the jungle property near Ubud, including its 16 spacious *balés* (villas). Encouraging guests to commune with nature on a whole new level (with mosquito nets providing a welcome buffer), the resort's game-changing design forms part of a meaningful commitment to sustainability that only enhances the guest experience. Notice it in the quality of the local craftmanship, from the hand-carved wooden headboards to the natural-dyed furnishings; taste it in the freshness of the wholesome dishes served up from the zero-waste kitchen, where produce is sourced from within an hour of the property; and embrace it on a range of local-led experiences helping to safeguard ancient traditions, from a crash-course in the art of *loloh* (traditional Balinese medicine extracted from nature) to spiritual healing guided by a Balinese priest.

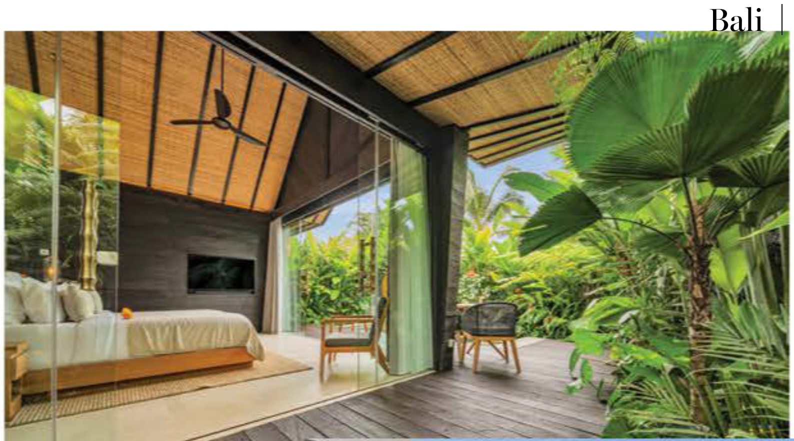
If you're unsettled by the possibility of sharing your loo with a frog, Buahan may nudge you out of your comfort zone. But for adventurous visitors with cash to splash mindfully, this first property in a new tier of sustainability-focused wilderness retreats is a memorable place to do it. *escape.banyantree.com*

DESA HAY, CANGGU

Entranced by Bali's beauty and culture, Canadian couple Scott and Julia Kowaleski and their son Josh set about finding a way to share their love for the island with visitors – without contributing to its problems. The result is Desa Hay, a six-villa stay just 10 minutes from the heart of Canggu. Stepping through the hand-carved door into the lush private garden cocooning your meticulously designed, ultra-energy-efficient pool *jabu* (Northern Sumatra-style villa), you'd never know this is the family's first foray into hospitality. Thoughtful touches such as the copy of *Tresna* (the first book in a memoir series by Canadian-born Frances Tse Ardika, the first foreigner to become a Balinese temple priestess) gently encourage a more mindful Bali holiday experience.

Also part of the SLH Considerate Collection, Desa Hay supports the IEPD Foundation-led construction of rainwater-fed 'recharge wells', designed to regenerate Bali's shrinking water table and the schooling of disadvantaged children via a scholarship fund. Look as hard as you can, but you won't find a skerrick of single-use plastic. And with all water treated onsite, this might be the only hotel in Bali where you can safely drink from the tap. Add to that a relaxed restaurant and bar fringed by a serene communal pool, and Desa Hay makes a strong case for spending your entire stay on the premises. It has a similarly sustainable sister retreat (Munduk Cabins) in north Bali's highlands, too. *desahay.com*





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Enjoy a boutique stay at Desa Hay; Its ultra-chic villas are open-plan; A sleek yet sustainable stay awaits at Anantara Ubud; Inside an Anantara villa; See the rice terraces of central Bali.* **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left): *Banyan Tree's* balés *have no walls; The resort sits within the jungle; A luxe outdoor soak at Desa Hay; Canggu Beach; Banyan Tree's open-air Toja Spa; Ubud's lush forests.*

ANANTARA UBUD, UBUD

Big hotel groups are often criticised for a sluggishness to implement (and meet) meaningful sustainability targets, yet even small steps taken across entire chains can have substantial impacts. One larger hotel group doubling down on its sustainability goals in 2023 is Anantara, which in January released a Sustainability Charter outlining a commitment to ramp up sustainability initiatives across its portfolio and chart its progress transparently.

Spilling down a lush hillside near Ubud, the brand's newest property, due to welcome its first guests in June, embodies this deeper commitment with initiatives ranging from an onsite water-purifying and bottling facility to energy-efficient technology and a clutch of restaurants showcasing organic produce from the resort's own chef's garden. John Roberts, group director of sustainability and conservation at Anantara, confirms there's also a long-term conservation initiative in the pipeline for the 66-room hotel – a Sustainability Charter objective for all nature-based properties. So you can feel better about kicking back in your stylish pool villa and indulging in an array of Balinese-inspired treatments at the Anantara Spa. *anantara.com* **IT**

PHOTOGRAPHY SVEN ELLSWORTH (ANANTARA SUITE INTERIOR)

In partnership with Wendy Wu Tours

BUCKET-LIST JAPAN

JAPAN HAS REOPENED FOR TOURISM, AND THE NEWS IS MUSIC TO MANY EARS. THE LAND OF NATURAL WONDERS, STIMULATING CITIES AND SPEEDY BULLET TRAINS HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE – FROM TRANSFORMATIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCES TO TANTALISING FOODIE MECCAS TO BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES THAT ARE RICH IN ANCIENT HISTORY. HERE ARE SOME BUCKET-LIST ITEMS THAT SIMPLY CAN'T BE MISSED.

BEPPU ONSENS

One of Japan's most famous onsen resorts, Beppu is blessed with eight different natural springs – each with public baths and facilities so guests can enjoy the soothing mineral benefits of the thermal waters, which can help ease aching muscles. Aside from onsens, find other forms of bathing across Beppu such as sand baths (soaking in heated sand) and mud baths. Even the hotels have their own onsens for guest use – the *Japan & The Scenic South Tour* by Wendy Wu Tours will see you staying in one such hotel, with the opportunity to have a pre-sleep soak at your leisure.

MOUNT FUJI IN CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON

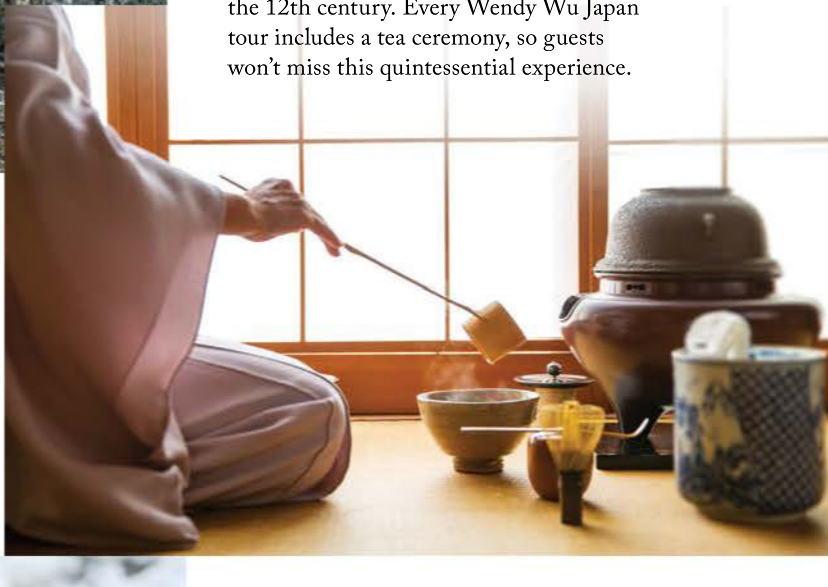
A visual representation of Japan, Mount Fuji during cherry blossom season should be top of every bucket list. Occurring during spring, April is the best time to witness the event. Head to Shizuoka or Yamanashi for those Instagram-worthy photos of Mount Fuji with a foreground blanketed in cherry blossoms, or take the Wendy Wu Tours *Experience Japan* trip to cruise the Fuji Five Lakes area for stunning vantage points of the mountain.

HOP ON THE BULLET TRAIN

The most famous mode of transport in Japan (if not the world), the bullet train is one of the easiest, quickest and most scenic ways to hop from city to city. The speedy rail system traverses Japan's islands and major cities, hurtling along at speeds of 300 kilometres an hour. Wendy Wu Tours offers a Japan By Rail *experience covering highlights across the country's three main islands – Kyushu, Honshu and Hokkaido – over 22 days.*

PARTAKE IN A TEA CEREMONY

A Japanese tea ceremony (known in Japan as 'The Way Of Tea') is not to be missed on a trip to the country. Rooted in Zen Buddhism, the origins of this historic practice date to the 12th century. Every Wendy Wu Japan tour includes a tea ceremony, so guests won't miss this quintessential experience.

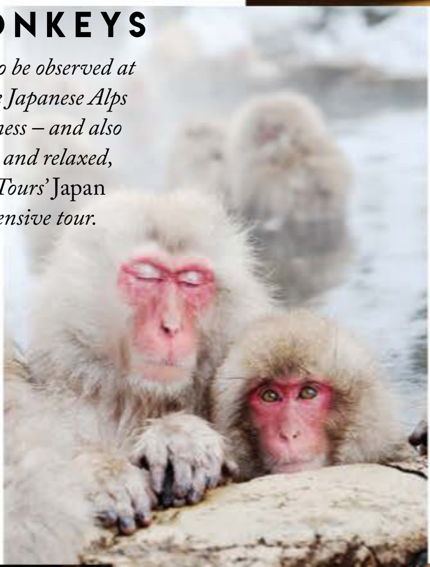


SEE KYOTO AND OSAKA

These two wildly different cities showcase Japan's rich cultural history. Kyoto was the capital for more than 1000 years and houses the former Emperor's residence, ancient temples and shrines, and the beautiful orange torii gates of the Fushimi Inari Shrine. In contrast, Osaka is a thrumming city with a top-tier street food and casual dining scene that foodies will delight in. These cities are part of Wendy Wu Tours' *Jewels Of Japan* tour.

SPEND TIME WITH SNOW MONKEYS

Accustomed to humans and therefore able to be observed at close-range, the snow monkeys of the Japanese Alps (Japanese macaques) are incredible to witness – and also extremely cute. Known for being docile and relaxed, enjoy their company on Wendy Wu Tours' Japan Uncovered, *the collection's most comprehensive tour.*

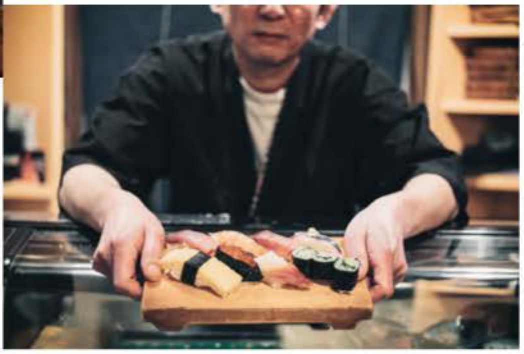


WATCH A SUMO MATCH

A form of wrestling originating back in the Antiquity period, Japan remains the only country where Sumo is practised professionally, with six tournaments held across the year. See one on selected departures of the *Off-Beat Japan* tour by Wendy Wu Tours.

EAT YOUR WAY THROUGH TOKYO

Japan's capital is also the birthplace of modern sushi. Nigiri is the most popular form of sushi here, where rice is moulded by hand and raw fish is added on top, namely tuna. There are so many ways to try sushi in Tokyo – but one that must be added to the list is via a conveyor belt restaurant, which also originated in Japan. Spend plenty of time in Tokyo on Wendy Wu Tours' Discover Japan, *which also takes guests to Kyoto and the Japanese foodie capital of Osaka.*



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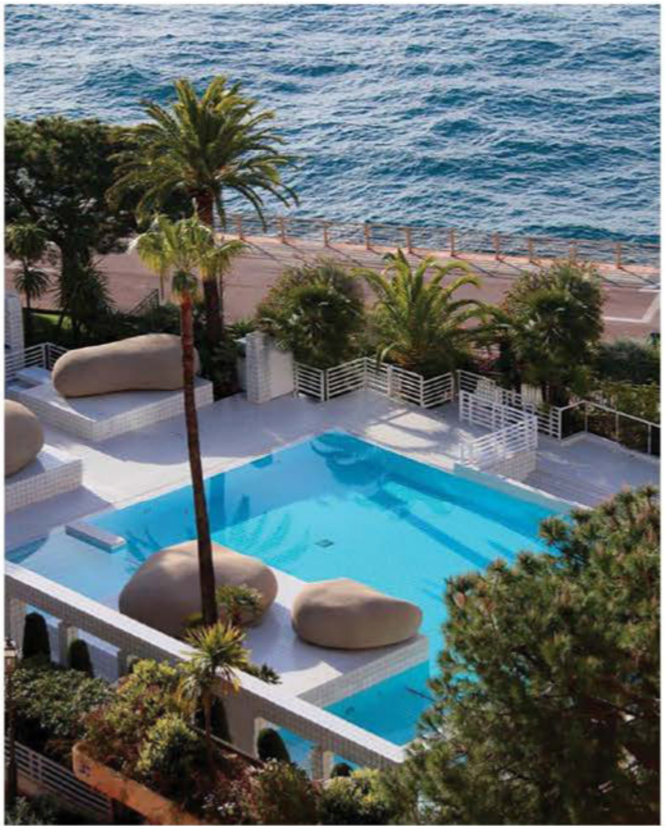
WORDS MELISSA MASON **PHOTOGRAPHY** JNTO (BEPPU / MT FUJI / TRAIN / SUSHI)

THIS PAGE: *Monaco is built on and around the dramatic Rocher.* **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left): *Belle Époque Casino de Monte-Carlo; Dine at Lebanese restaurant Em Sherif at luxe Hôtel de Paris; Columbus Monte-Carlo is a boutique place to stay.*

URBAN JUNGLE

MONACO IS FAMED FOR ITS GLAMOUR AND OPULENCE, BUT ITS SERIOUSLY IMPRESSIVE GREEN SCENE IS WHERE IT TRULY SHINES. **IMOGEN EVESON** DISCOVERS A DIFFERENT SIDE TO THE TINY PRINCIPALITY ON THE GLITTERING CÔTE D'AZUR.

PHOTOGRAPHY B VERGÉLY (CASINO); MONTE-CARLO SOCIÉTÉ DES BAINS DE MER (RESTAURANT EM SHERIF)



With its opulent Belle Époque architecture in profile against the shimmering Mediterranean Sea, the Casino de Monte-Carlo has long been enticing visitors to Monaco. It was opened in 1863 in a bid to revitalise the newly sovereign principality's economy after it ceded around 95 per cent of its territory – including most of its agricultural land – to neighbouring France. In the years that followed, the casino transformed the tiny locale into a luxurious playground synonymous today with the superyachts that gleam in the port beneath Le Rocher (the Rock of Monaco). The dramatic promontory sets the scene for the legends of the rich and famous that have unfolded here throughout the ages.

Yet the star attraction when I visit on a few blue-sky days in spring is the truly impressive green scene that underpins everyday life here. This is a place where e-bikes, e-cars and even e-boats are the way to get around. And that's when Monégasques aren't nimbly navigating the hilly streets on foot, hopping on and off a network of public elevators and escalators to crisscross the principality with mountain-goat ease. Monaco is the world's most densely populated country and its high rises crowd out the Belle Époque villas that gleam like architectural gems from Monaco's early development. But so too do its green spaces: packed as they are into every spare inch of the two square kilometres that hug the Côte d'Azur. In fact, more than 20 per cent of the principality is parkland, not to mention the urban farms sprouting from rooftops. Since launching her company Terrae in 2016, urban agriculture pioneer Jessica Sbaraglia has carved – out of concrete – 1640 square metres of market gardens in Monaco. They service, among other things, the world's first 100 per cent organic Michelin-starred restaurant, Elsa. Reducing food waste >>

is of paramount importance here; even the finest establishments give food boxes to diners to take away leftovers. At Em Sherif Monte-Carlo within the gilded Hôtel de Paris Monte-Carlo, where the discreet but unmistakable bustle of security personnel tells us we're dining in VIP company, my travel companions and I are offered boxes to take away the sumptuous Lebanese feast we haven't quite been able to finish. And sustainability is stamped on the prestigious motorsport calendar, too. First held in 2015, the Monaco E-Prix is now a fixture of the scene today and races the same legendary circuit as Formula One.

You can find the seeds of modern-day green Monaco in the bricks and mortar of the Oceanographic Museum. This monumental temple to the sea is built into the side of Le Rocher, watching over the water with its facade rendered exuberantly in Baroque Revival style. Today it serves as a natural history museum and aquarium as well as the nexus for the Oceanographic Institute, Foundation Albert I, Prince of Monaco's far-reaching research. Created in 1906, it was the vision of Prince Albert I. The sailor turned scientist turned environmentalist devoted himself to the ocean, explains CEO of the institute and director of the museum, Robert Calcagno. "What is really amazing is that the mission statement of the Oceanographic Institute has not changed since its creation more than 115 years ago," says Calcagno. "To know, love and protect the ocean, which sounds very contemporary. So maybe Prince Albert I was the first activist for the protection of the ocean."

Later in 1976, Prince Rainier III created the world's first protected marine reserve in Monaco. Today, Prince Albert I's great-great grandson has picked up the environmental baton. Albert II, Prince of Monaco is well known as a staunch environmentalist who has long used his voice to raise awareness of climate change around the world. With a focus on biodiversity, climate, the ocean and water resources, the foundation he established in 2006 has donated more than $100 million to causes around the world. Professor Tim Flannery, one of Australia's leading writers on climate change, is on the board of directors along with Calcagno.

The connection between Monaco and Australia runs deep. Having once lived and worked in Sydney, Calcagno himself has been instrumental in fostering a close relationship between the Oceanographic Institute and our own shores, a world away but bound by the seas. In 2016, Torres Strait Islander artist and activist Alick Tipoti contributed to the Oceanographic Museum's major exhibition *Taba Naba: Australia, Oceania and the Art of the Peoples of the Sea*. Two years later, after the artist reciprocated the invitation, Prince Albert – accompanied by Calcagno – travelled to Badu Island in the Torres Strait, the first head of state to do so. There, they spent time with the Badulgal people, learning about the community's symbiosis with the ocean and the pressures that threaten it. "We stayed there and enjoyed a simple life, speaking about the ocean and understanding [that] relationship," says Calcagno. "It was a relaxing time for us, but we learnt a lot." The journey is documented in an affecting and thought-provoking film, *Alick and Albert*, released in 2021 and available to watch on Stan.

The Prince's popularity among his fellow Monégasques means his passion for environmentalism trickles down to the streets – from his choice of car – electric of course – to what you'll find on your plate; after he made a stand against the overfishing of Atlantic bluefin tuna in 2008, all restaurants across Monaco removed it from their menus until fisheries were regulated and the species was no longer facing imminent extinction.

Careful use of resources is being considered in all corners. We pull up a stool at the hole-in-the-wall La Distillerie de Monaco in the elegant Condamine district to sample a taste of the principality – literally. Monégasque Philip Culazzo, a Dubliner with Italian heritage, was

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Monaco hugs the coast above the shimmering Mediterranean Sea; Dining al fresco at Em Sherif Monte-Carlo; La Distillerie de Monaco is the principality's first and only distillery; Its signature liqueur is crafted using local citrus.* **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left): *The Oceanographic Museum has been watching over the seas for more than a century; Find a taste of local life in the low-key district of Fontvieille; The Casino de Monte-Carlo is a legendary destination.*

Diners sit on wooden tables at the tip of a pier to eat sustainably farmed oysters washed down with a clean Côtes de Provence white under the Riviera sun.

AMARO
SANTO

inspired to create Monaco's first and only distillery after stumbling on a spark of inspiration through exploring its agricultural history. Long before tourism, citrus production was the mainstay of the economy, traded for rum with sailors on merchant ships looking to stave off scurvy on long trips to the Americas. "I realised here in Monaco there are still 600 bitter orange trees that grow inside the principality, owned by the Crown, and they were producing between 10 to 15 tonnes of fruit every year which was being thrown away," he says. This resulted in the distillery opening in 2017 with its signature product L'Orangerie, a bitter orange liqueur handmade using the oranges that grow on Monaco's boulevards and otherwise go to waste when they drop from the trees. The suite of spirited souvenirs is complemented by a clean and citrusy Gin Aux Agrumes and a carob liqueur, Carruba, crafted using the fruit from the national tree of Monaco.

We get a taste of the sea at Les Perles de Monte-Carlo, where diners sit on wooden tables at the tip of a pier to eat sustainably farmed oysters washed down with a clean Côtes de Provence white under the Riviera sun. This hidden gem, founded by certified marine biologists Brice Cachia and Frédéric Rouxeville in 2011, sits alongside an oyster nursery and ripening centre – unique in a region where traditional oyster farming is almost non-existent.

Located in the low-key district of Fontvieille, Les Perles de Monte-Carlo is also the key to unlocking another side of the destination altogether. Monaco's glamour is undeniably seductive – the rooftop cocktails at Fairmont Monte-Carlo, the lunch with sparkling sea views at Le Méridien Beach Plaza's L'intempo restaurant and the >>

PHOTOGRAPHY B VERGÉLY (CASINO & CLIFFSIDE PATH); MONTE-CARLO SOCIÉTÉ DES BAINS DE MER (RESTAURANT EM SHERIF)

Perles Monte-Carlo

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: *The Princess Grace Rose Garden in Fontvieille; Les Perles de Monte-Carlo is a sustainably farmed oyster bar; At the tip of a pier in the Port de Fontvieille.*

spa treatments at grand Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo all serve to make you forget yourself for a moment. But you don't have to scratch far beneath the surface to discover the principality's most authentic side. In Fontvieille, the boutique Columbus Hotel gives guests a taste of real Monégasque life. Here, eco-friendly initiatives are second nature: from soap recycling to a restaurant committed to local supply chains, and energy needs supplied by a waste-to-energy district heating and seawater pumping plant.

"Monaco exists thanks to tourism and we have to be careful how we do that," says director of sales and proud Monégasque Nancy Ricozzi over breakfast one morning. Staying here in this neighbourhood hotel reveals a relaxed scene; around the corner families gather and friends share after-work drinks along a buzzy strip of restaurants and bars. "This is where the real Monégasques live. You have to take the time to get lost in the city to discover what it really is."

I delight in uncovering Monaco's threads of interest and leave with a list of things I still want to do; I didn't make it to the lofty Exotic Garden, with its succulents and views across the whole principality, or to the Francis Bacon institute, which offers insight into the period the artist lived and worked here. The intriguing story goes that, broke after losing his money at the casino and unable to buy new canvases, he developed his signature technique of painting on the raw side of the canvas.

"When you say Monaco, straightaway people think supercars and James Bond," says Ricozzi. "But if you take the time to discover the real Monaco, it will give you so much." **IT**

A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

Monaco is a 30-minute drive from Nice Côte d'Azur Airport.

STAYING THERE

COLUMBUS MONTE-CARLO is a boutique neighbourhood hotel in the Fontvieille district with rooms overlooking the Princess Grace Rose Garden and a suite of sustainability initiatives to its name. *columbushotels.com*

PLAYING THERE

Climb to **MONACO-VILLE**, popularly known as **LE ROCHER**, to explore the oldest of Monaco's four quarters and where the royal family lives. Wander narrow alleyways that date to the Middle Ages and head to the **PLACE DU PALAIS** at 11.55am to watch the changing of the guard in front of the **PRINCE'S PALACE**. Take in the Roman-Byzantine-style **CATHÉDRALE DE MONACO**, wander the winding paths of **ST MARTIN GARDENS**, where you can stare out to sea like the statue of Prince Albert I does, before losing yourself in the aquariums and exhibition displays of the **OCEANOGRAPHIC MUSEUM OF MONACO**. *musee.oceano.org*

Head to **MONTE-CARLO**, Monaco's most emblematic district, to encounter the grandeur and history of **MONTE-CARLO CASINO**, wander the parks and gardens and simply soak in the glam atmosphere.

Take a day trip to dreamy locales on the French Riviera, including the medieval hilltop town of **ÈZE** – just 15 minutes' drive or a short bus trip away.

While the **EXOTIC GARDEN** is closed for renovations until 2024, the **BOTANICAL CENTRE** remains open. *jardin-exotique.mc*

Tour the **FRANCIS BACON MB ART FOUNDATION** by appointment. *bartfoundation.com*

See *visitmonaco.com* for more.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY PERLES MONTE-CARLO (OYSTER BAR & MAIN); VISIT MONACO (ROSE GARDEN)

~ TASTE OF HAWAIʻI ~

HOT PLATES

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SNACKS
FRUIT
WATER
PICK UP

AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH The HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

High spirits

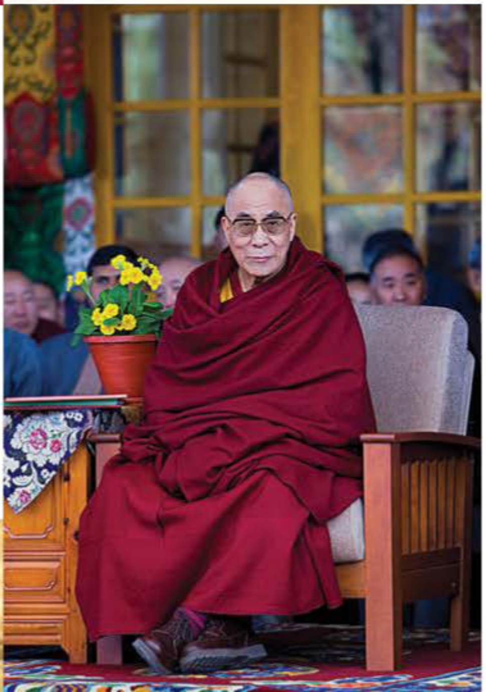
SITTING FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH THE DALAI LAMA, **ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD** FINDS LIFE LESSONS AND A SLICE OF TIBETAN CULTURE IN INDIA'S 'LITTLE TIBET'.

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: *Buddhist monks gather in Dharamshala; Colourful prayer flags at Kalaczakra temple; His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Namgyal Monastery.*

I'm sitting cross-legged inside a monastery, crammed shoulder to shoulder between a throng of Buddhist monks. It's not just any monastery, though. Namgyal Monastery is the home temple of the Dalai Lama, who is due to arrive any minute now. Young monks swathed in sumac-coloured robes are making their way through the packed hall with enormous teapots of scalding-hot yak-butter tea (a thick, calorie-laden drink that's been a staple in Tibet since the 10th century), divvying it out among the masses. One monk leads in a mesmerising chant, a hypnotic melody that spellbinds the chamber. All around me, monks are swaying side to side, transforming the monastery floor into a gently oscillating sea of saffron and crimson robes. Then, there's silence. A wave of reverence sweeps over the temple; heads bow and palms press together as one of the highest spiritual leaders in the world enters the space.

The town is a temporary home to many of the Tibetans settled in the picturesque hill station of Dharamshala-McLeod Ganj. Thousands of refugees, including the Dalai Lama, fled their occupied homelands and settled here, where the North Indian hillside begins to heave into the mighty mountains of the Himalayas. Nothing about Dharamshala feels transitory, though. The mountain town has a worn-in, cosy feel about it, like a pair of trusted leather boots. The streets are infused with the smell of cinnamon, cloves and star anise from *chaiwalas* (tea sellers) who preside over vats of steaming masala tea. Plates of plump, succulent *momos* (a Tibetan bite-sized dumpling) are available on nearly every corner. The emerald pine forests surrounding the town are cleaved only by a winding serpentine road, leading up to the vibrant backpacker hubs of Dharamkot and Bhagsu.

The region draws in tourists from all over the world. Many come to witness Tibetan culture, hike among the beautiful surroundings, or get in touch with their inner yogi by flocking to one of the yoga and meditation schools peppered around the mountainside. Today, I'm trying out the latter. I'm striking my very best warrior pose under the instruction of Omji, a renowned yogi and reiki master with a Cheshire cat's grin, a booming laugh and messianic, gold-flecked eyes. We transition >>



onto the floor, legs stretched in front of us, instructed to touch our fingertips to our toes. Mine can barely graze my knees. "Sorry, I'm not very flexible," is all I have to say for myself, as I notice Omji's eyes upon me. "I can see that," he replies, flashing his winning smile.

At the end of our session, we gather in a circle and he pours each of us a fragrant cup of herbal tea. Omji speaks of the hundreds of travellers he teaches each year, many seeking self-knowledge or a deepening of the spirit. Our class is simply the latest iteration of faces passing through – although we're treated with the warmth and familiarity of old friends.

One of the most prominent drawcards of the region is the spectacular trekking that it offers. It's a few days later when I've decided to tackle the steep track up to the hill station of Triund, guided by my friend Abhijeet. It doesn't take long before the village falls away and the majesty of the mountains begins to reveal itself. We pass through misty waterfalls with streams of wind-battered prayer flags fluttering in the breeze. We hug the side of the trail as goat herders stride past us, their flock waddling in tow, the din of their clanging bells sounding out as they disappear into the distance. The verdant landscape feels airy and alive; as if you could feel the earth flexing against your soles as you step.

The view from Triund is otherworldly. Or so I've been told. I can't actually see any of it. Not only do the clouds suffocate all traces of a panorama, but a heavy rain descends upon us as we approach the lookout. We hide out for an hour beneath the tarp of a chaiwala, chitchatting and dunking Parle-G biscuits into the sweet brew. Just as we're about to cut our losses and make for a descent, the sun breaks through the clouds, spilling honeyed light into the valley. The scenery comes into view like an apparition; the sun's glow illuminating the creases and furrows embedded in the mountains around us. It draws the snow-capped peaks of the distant Dhauladhar ranges clearly into view. It doesn't last, though. It's a brief, blissful yawn from the heavens before they plunge back into a slate-grey slumber.

It's nightfall by the time we return to Bhagsu and, by then, the cafes are alive with travellers and dreadlocked hippies strumming, drumming and jamming away between sips of canned beer. I stop by my favourite one, Welcome Cafe, for a warming plate of dahl and a nightcap of masala tea.

The most unique feature of the region is a rare opportunity to immerse oneself in Tibetan culture. Independent travel is prohibited in Tibet, so Dharamshala offers an opportunity for visitors to experience a slice of Tibet's rich culture and religion outside of the Tibetan Plateau (also known as 'the roof of the world').

I encountered this richness wandering around Namgyal Monastery a few days earlier. The temple grounds are simple, save for one room gilded with statues of golden multi-limbed gods, set against a mighty mural of intricate *bhavacakra* (a form of mandala). It's a mesmerising kaleidoscope of vibrant colours and mythical creatures, representing the Tibetan 'Wheel of Life' and philosophy of reincarnation and cyclical existence. It's a concept I'm eager to learn more about when I sit for an audience with the Dalai Lama himself.

As it turns out, I can't understand anything the Dalai Lama is saying. I've missed the memo – I was supposed to bring a radio and headset to tune into the live translation of the teaching, which is spoken in the Dalai Lama's native Tibetan. However, I do recognise one word the Dalai Lama keeps repeating throughout his talk – *ahimsa*. It's an ancient Sanskrit word for the principle of non-violence toward all living beings. I notice a flea bouncing across the carpet. An alarmed traveller in front of me raises her hand above it, wavering hesitantly. But before she can commit to the blow, a monk gently takes the tiny creature between his thumb and forefinger, plucks it from the ground and places it safely in a small pouch to be relocated later. I may not comprehend the Dalai Lama's teachings, but I suspect the scene in front of me has taught me all I need to know. **IT**

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: *Take in sweeping views from the hill station of Triund; Yak-butter tea is a traditional Tibetan drink; Soak up a slice of mountain serenity at Bhagsu Waterfall; The vibrant streets of McLeod Ganj; A monk walks outside Tsuglagkhang Complex; Enjoy a taste of the high life at the Hyatt Regency Resort.*

A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

The fastest way is to fly from Delhi to Kangra-Gaggal Airport, which takes just over an hour's flight time. From there, it's roughly another hour by taxi to Dharamshala-McLeod Ganj.

STAYING THERE

Experience alpine luxury at the upscale **HYATT REGENCY DHARAMSHALA RESORT** (*hyatt.com*), where you'll find yourself sequestered by lofty pine trees. A little way out of town, **MANDARA TREE VILLA** (*mandaratree.com*) has some of the best mountain views in the region. Or experience local culture with a homestay such as **REDEEM CAFE & HOMESTAY**.

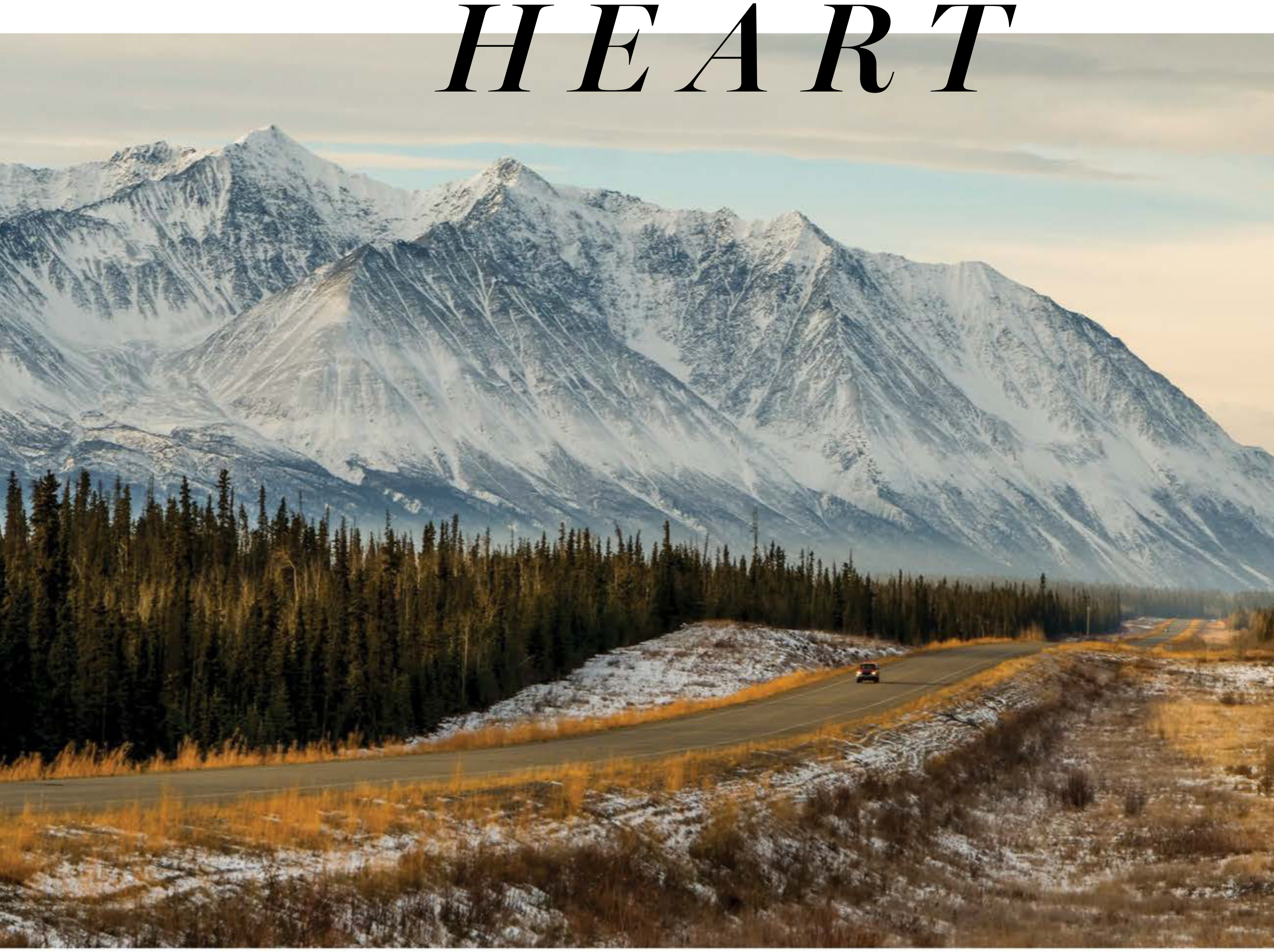
PLAYING THERE

Walk to the majestic **BHAGSU WATERFALL** and sip on chai at the famous **SHIVA CAFE**. Immerse yourself in Tibetan culture at the **TSUGLAGKHANG COMPLEX**, which encompasses **TSUGLAGKHANG TEMPLE**, **NAMGYAL MONASTERY** and the **TIBETAN MUSEUM**. Find your inner-bliss at **TUSHITA MEDITATION CENTRE** (*tushita.info*), where you can take courses in meditation and Buddhist philosophy. For food, make a beeline for **TIBET KITCHEN** in McLeod Ganj, which offers delicious and authentic Tibetan dishes that are guaranteed to warm your belly.

TALKING THERE

English is widely spoken in the region, but a simple thank you goes a long way. That's *dhanyavaad* in Hindi, and *thu-chi che* in Tibetan.

JOURNEY to the HEART



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: *Kluane National Park in southwest Yukon is one of the planet's largest protected wildlife areas; At Carcross Commons you'll find a replica of Skookum Jim's house as well as memorial poles, totem poles and other buildings.*

BACK ON TURTLE ISLAND, **ELSPETH CALLENDER** EXPERIENCES CANADA'S YUKON TERRITORY THROUGH THE STORIES AND PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES AND CULTURES.

I know this midday summer sun over Carcross will burn my face. There's sunscreen in my daypack, strewn just beyond reach, or I could stand up and step into the tall shadow thrown by the towering story pole. Either might break Gary Sidney Johnson's flow, and nothing feels more important right now than sitting still and listening.

I'm back in Canada's Yukon Territory in the north-west corner of Turtle Island – the lands now also known as North and Central America. I return here almost annually, in all seasons, for paddling trips on the Nisutlin and Yukon rivers, dog sledding on Fish Lake, riding a snow mobile around Dawson and camping in Kluane National Park at -30° Celsius. Yet, this time, I've travelled here with an intention I should always have had: to prioritise the people whose traditional territory I'm on and engage with their cultures. A few days in and, already, I'm putting the pieces of the puzzle together.

Gary is a Tagish and Inland Tlingit (CLING-kit) man dedicated to cultural revival. He is part of various dance groups including Dakhká Khwáan Dancers, an award-winning Inland Tlingit troupe based in Whitehorse. He explains he has three Tlingit names, adding that the one given at birth references Tagish Lake and that loud rumble when the spring comes and the ice shifts. "Basically, any way you translate it, I'm loud," says Gary, who is dressed in striking Dakhlawèdí (killer whale) regalia.

A TRUE NORTHERNER

I'm with Teena Dickson, who owns and operates Who What Where Tours. Her mother is Chipewyan from South Slave region of Northwest Territories. Teena was born in Fort Simpson, raised in the Yukon and

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Gary Sidney Johnson is Tagish and Inland Tlingit; A dancer at the Adäka Festival in Whitehorse, which is a celebration of First Nations culture and art; A killer whale totem; A scenic flight over the world's largest non-polar icefield in Kluane National Park; There are 14 First Nations and seven language groups in the Yukon.*

has lived in the North country all her life. David and Teena Dickson and their grown children, Teah and Thomas, own the Yukon's oldest operating hunting outfit in the Kluane region. It was founded in 1902 by David's grandfather, Thomas Dickson, who was married to coastal Tlingit woman Louise George.

Today, Teena has driven me an hour south-east of Whitehorse, the Yukon's capital, on the Klondike Highway. This extremely scenic route eventually takes you to Skagway in Alaska, USA. Arriving in Carcross, Teena knew that Tlingit artist/carver Keith Wolfe-Smarch was in or near his studio because his 'truck' was parked outside.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Carcross is a 300-person strong community. Many are members of self-governing Carcross/Tagish First Nation. In his quietly welcoming way, Keith walks me around the naturally lit space. There are wood carvings in progress on benches, standing sculptures needing wear and tear repair, and completed works on walls.

This master carver, dedicated mentor and internationally recognised artist takes the time to explain the traditional mirror-image style and introduces me to his designs. There's a raven, crow, frog, wolf, killer whale and split-tail beaver. There are also tanned lynx, coyote, red fox and ermine furs hanging on a rack. "My grandson and I got a couple of otters last winter." I touch the largest. "This is wolf," he says. Keith's in his studio most days. "We never turn anybody away."

There are more artists and craftspeople at Carcross Commons, a huge open-air timber platform dotted with cultural poles and small buildings. Some exterior walls bear enormous Tlingit designs. Tourists wander between stalls that sell arts, crafts and maple syrup products. Gary regularly shares his culture with visitors here and at nearby Haa Shagóon Hídi cultural centre. As he explains the meaning behind the colourful memorial, totem and story poles, I realise every design aspect of Tlingit art has meaning and significance.

Gary Sidney Johnson is deeply passionate about language revival. "In my opinion, there are 14 First Nations and seven languages in the Yukon," he says as I take a seat at the story pole carved by Keith. "There's only one Tagish speaker in the whole world and only two Tlingit speakers left in Carcross and they're 91 and 93."

AN IMPORTANT STORY

Gary points out a replica of a house that Tagish man Skookum Jim lived in. "The original burned down," he says. In 1897, Skookum Jim and his sister Kate Carmack found gold in what became known as Bonanza Creek, which triggered the Klondike Gold Rush. Like Gary and Keith, Skookum Jim was Dakhlawèdí.

For over an hour Gary speaks and sings and drums stories of travel, risk, ingenuity, intuition, feasting, hunting, family, marriage, responsibilities and love. "A lot of our stories have a lot of love in them." The action plays out right here, over in Alaska and even in Europe, highlighting the part his Ancestors have played in world events.

"Even though the land is beautiful, there's a lot of sadness," says Gary. First Nations people here continue to be impacted by

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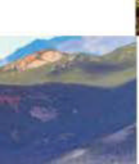


PHOTOGRAPHY ENVIRO FOTO/JF BERGERON (GARY SIDNEY JOHNSON); FRITZ MUELLER (DANCER); HANS-GERHARD PFAFF (SCENIC FLIGHT)

colonial invasion, land theft, dispossession, genocide, forced assimilation and other ongoing systematic and everyday forms of racism. Gary's own journey hasn't been easy, but "culture and language, it healed me and made me come into my own".

Gary then tells the story of the Dakhlawèdí moving inland from Auke Bay area in Alaska during the last Ice Age "to find more land, more places to live and prosper". People travelled up an inlet and then a river until they reached a glacier. "They sent a runner to go to the end of the glacier and light a fire… and they decided to go under the glacier."

They sang a song as they went, he says. "The drum beats come from the way we used to travel, so a lot of our beats are slow and solid, like paddling a canoe. Or we do a slow heartbeat: one two, one two. So that's how you know when it's a Tlingit song because that's the drum beat."

While he sings this song, I can't help but look over at Teena. She's already eyeballing me. We exchange wide eyes and small nods. "So those are the oldest songs that I can share with you," says Gary in finishing. "Those go back to the last Ice Age, over 10,000 years ago."

We flew right over the exact glacier he speaks of only yesterday. Our pilot had taken us on a gigantic 90-minute loop. We went from the tiny inland airstrip at Haines Junction, over Kluane National Park, right out across the world's largest non-polar icefield, nearly to the coast and back past 5959-metre high Mt Logan – Canada's highest mountain. "This was the glacier that captivated us," Teena explains to Gary, "because it was so massive and twin." We'd seen multitudes but I also distinctly remember that one.

WHITEHORSE SCENE

I spend the next day in Whitehorse, which stands on the traditional territory of the self-governing nations of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I lunch at Gather Cafe with Tetlin Gwich'in woman Sharon Vittrekwa, the Yukon First Nations Arts (YFNA) store manager and an artist herself with a distinct beadwork style. After lunch, Sharon leads me around Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, bringing the displays to life. The YFNA studio, on the first floor of Horwoods Mall, is packed with cultural works. Full from lunch, we lie on deer furs Sharon ordered thinking she was buying hide. "Our people, when they travelled around, carried that to sleep on. They'd just throw it on the ground, spruce boughs underneath," she explains. "You have the air on your back and body." She talks about the smell of bannock and caribou meat cooking on the fire, and of enduring 13 years at residential school. We also find things to laugh about until our bellies ache.

YFNA's artists create beadwork, visual arts, basketry, metalwork, traditional sewing, weaving, textiles and fibre, carving and sculpture. "There's nothing more beautiful," says Sharon, than "selling their work and knowing them and knowing the materials they're using and, in your heart, you know the struggles they're going through." YFNA guarantees the work for sale is ethically sourced and quality work by First Nations artists and makers. Respected Whitehorse retailers include the Indian Craft Shop and Unorthodox.

Along with countless artists, there are more than 20 First Nations tour operators, many cultural centres and annual cultural events. For example, Michelle Olesh's Yukon Water Bikes on Chadburn Lake near Whitehorse, Long Ago People's

PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHBOULD PHOTOGRAPHY (STORY POLE); ELSPETH CALLENDER (TEENA DICKSON); ENVIRO FOTO (KEITH WOLFE-SMARCH); GOVERNMENT OF YUKON (KEITH WOLFE-SMARCH CARVINGS); ANDREW SERACK (HAA SHAGOON HIDI)

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Tlingit artist Keith Wolfe-Smarch at work; The artist's carvings; A story pole in Carcross; Every design aspect of Tlingit art has significance; Tour guide Teena Dickson flying over Kluane; Haa Shagóon Hídi, a cultural learning centre in Carcross.* **OPPOSITE:** *Kluane is part of the traditional territory of the Southern Tutchone people.*

Place near Champagne and the summertime cultural festival Adäka in Whitehorse.

That evening, Teena and I dine with former Kluane First Nation chief Mathieya Alatini, first elected to the role at 29. We eat at Belly of the Bison in the Edgewater, and drink Nk'Mip wine (INK-a-meep) from Osoyoos, British Columbia. The conversation ranges from cultural pride, the achievement of 11 self-governing First Nations in the Yukon, and the oversight of wearing a white shirt then ordering ribs.

The day after my tour ends, Teena messages me to say Kaska Dena visual and performing artist Dennis Shorty, who lives five hours from Whitehorse, is staying at Caribou RV Park. I'm there in 15 minutes. Dennis is carving antler and his partner Jenny is laying out his copper jewellery. The Dickson name elicits immediate smiles. I stay chatting for ages. Next summer I'm staying with them in Ross River. **IT**

A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

AIR CANADA flies direct from Sydney and Brisbane to Vancouver. Air Canada and AIR NORTH both connect Vancouver to Whitehorse. *aircanada.com; flyairnorth.com*

STAYING THERE

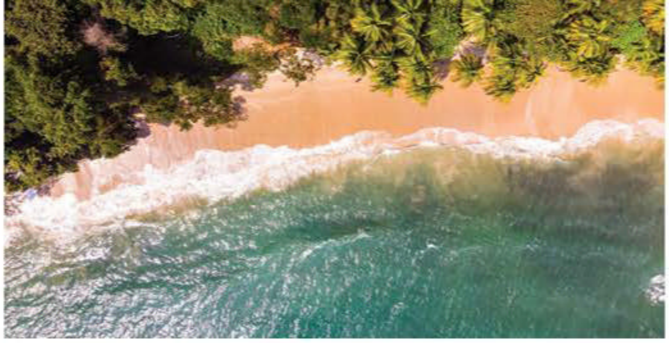
The EDGEWATER is in central Whitehorse and has an equal access room. *edgewaterhotelwhitehorse.com*

TOURING THERE

Travel independently or with WHO WHAT WHERE TOURS (*whitehorsetours.com*); enjoy sightseeing with ROCKING STAR ADVENTURES (*rockingstar.ca*); contact HAA SHAGÓON HÍDI (Our Ancestors House) cultural centre in Carcross to enquire about Gary Sidney Johnson's tours. For more information see *yfnct.ca; ctfn.ca/haa-shagoon-hidi; yfnarts.ca*

SHORT FILMS TO WATCH BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY

Journeys to Adäka; Shift, the making of a mountain-biking trail in Carcross, Canada.



Grass Routes

GABON

GABON IS THE MOST CARBON-POSITIVE COUNTRY ON THE PLANET, MAKING IT A DREAM DESTINATION FOR CONSCIOUS TRAVELLERS.

Gabon is being described as The Last Eden, the next big place for ecotourism and adventure. Around 88 per cent of the country on the west coast of Central Africa is blanketed in verdant, equatorial rainforest. And it's the country's commitment to preserving this untouched environment that has seen it earmarked by adventure travellers, nature lovers and environmental preservationists.

Within this green, shady habitat is the largest population of forest elephants in the world, numbered at about 95,000, and an estimated 30,000 gorillas and chimpanzees.

Gabon is, according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the most carbon-positive country in the world. The UN says it is also the first country in Africa to be awarded results-based payments for reducing emissions from deforestation. Go Gabon.

In some ways, this magical landscape tells a tale about hope over despair and is a reminder that we take the Earth for granted at our peril. The Gabon government's dedication to sustainability, biodiversity and conservation has seen the country internationally recognised for the role it has taken in combating climate change globally.

For the past decade or so, there has been a concerted effort to promote conservation of marine habitats through the Gabon Bleu initiative, which has led to the declaration of a whopping 27 per cent of Gabon's marine waters as protected areas.

Lovers of wildlife are lured to Gabon to see the southern hemisphere's largest population of humpback whales, which nurse their young off the Atlantic Coast before migrating south. The world's largest populations of leatherback turtles and a regionally significant population of olive ridley turtles also go to Gabon to nest.

Hold up a mirror to Gabon and it will reflect a template our world leaders need to follow. Gabon has gazetted 13 national parks, with a total of 22 per cent of Gabon's land falling within protected areas. Using its giant lungs, Gabon removes just over 100 million more tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere per annum than it emits. In addition to forests brimming with wildlife, there are beautiful beaches and cultural experiences to be had.

WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI **PHOTOGRAPHY** LAURA VESMARE (ELEPHANT)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Gabon boasts 800 kilometres of coastline; It has the largest population of forest elephants in the world; Locals paddling in Mayumba National Park; An African skimmer soars; Pongara National Park is blessed with estuaries, mangroves and flooded forests; Baguettes are a staple in Gabon, which has a distinct French accent; A gorilla in Loango National Park.*

TREAD LIGHTLY...

It seems only right to tread lightly in Gabon. Here are three eco tours worth taking.

Gabon Adventure Tours

Enjoy an 11-day small group adventure through Loanga and Lopé national parks. You'll witness Gabon's native flora and fauna – some of the most diversified in the world. Tour activities include following the flank of mountains while tracking mandrills, gorillas and chimpanzees. There are opportunities to spot forest elephants, red forest buffalo and red river hogs. Watch for birds as the skies turn mauve. *@gabonadventuretours*

Birding Ecotours

Gabon is crossed by the equator and borders Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo; it has this ideal location to thank for its biodiversity. It's also on the flight path for a range of exotic bird species, so twitchers will delight in keeping a scorecard on an excursion with Birding Ecotours. There's the African skimmer, the palm-nut vulture and the great blue turaco, which has a penchant for peacocking. *birdingecotours.com*

Gabon Travel and Tours

Loango National Park was put on the map when Sir David Attenborough featured footage of surfing hippos in his BBC series, *Africa: Eye to Eye with the Unknown*. Perhaps you're witnessing the evolution of the species? Depending on the season, you can also see humpback and killer whales on The Surfing Hippos of Loango National Park tour. Settle into your jungle camp of an afternoon to hear the evening orchestra of birds and beasts under the stars. *gabontravelandtours.com*

THREE OF THE BEST

Fare go in Gabon

Scratch the surface of Gabon, a former French colony, and you will find the country maintains strong ties to French language and culture. The flavours of France can be found in Gabonese cuisine, and it's common to see everything from beignets to baguettes on the menu. But instead of slathering butter onto baguettes, the Gabonese bite off bits of bread with boiled atanga fruit. They also serve the baguette stuffed with spit-roasted meat, peppers, onions and hot sauce. Head to Plage de la Sablière in Libreville, the nation's capital, to find restaurants serving regional specialties.

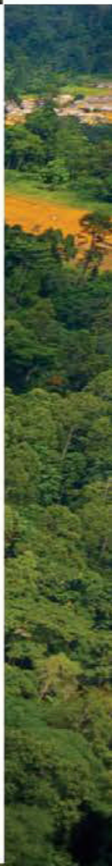
The National Museum of Arts and Traditions

The Musée National des Arts, Rites et Traditions du Gabon is located in Libreville and considered a cultural treasure. The museum has indexed its exhibitions into categories: traditional life and musical arts, prehistory and history, plastic arts and traditional crafts. It also widens the lens to focus on precious Gabonese objects such as masks, sculptures and works of art. Take a guided tour of the museum to learn all about the Gabonese and how their cultural identity centres around dance, songs, myths and poetry. *facebook.com/mnartgabon*

Pointe-Denis Beach

Fall in step with the rhythm of local life at Pointe-Denis Beach, located on a finger of land that separates the Atlantic Ocean and the mouth of the Komo River. Linger at one of the beachside restaurants, sunbathe on a patch of sand, join in a friendly game of soccer or drift along to live music. Follow the winter sun and visit Gabon between June and September, which is the drier season, as the country's proximity to the equator means it is prone to rainfall. **IT**

To find out more about green Gabon, visit discovergabon.com



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JOURNEYS

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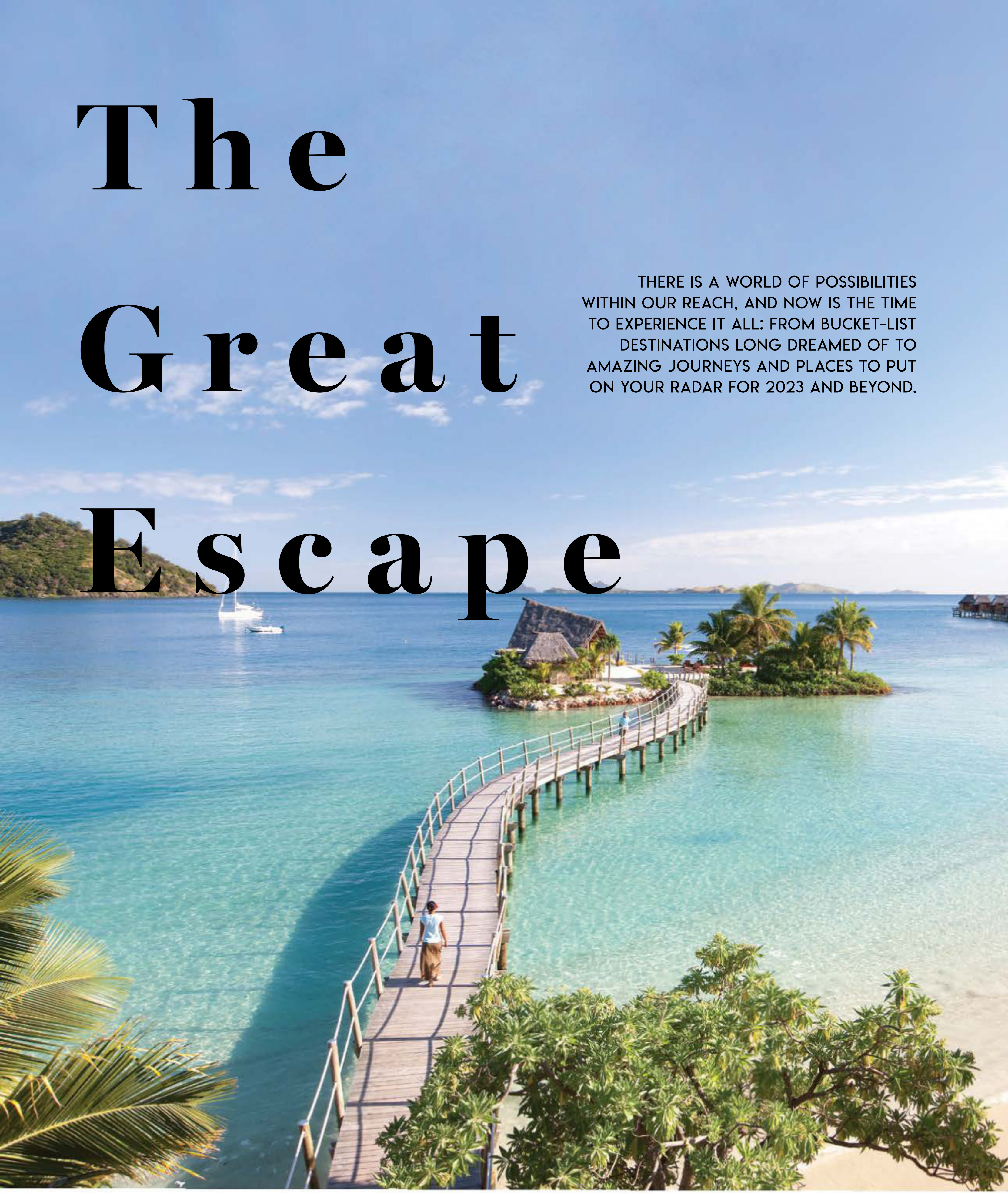
aperitivo & al
ENOTECA
AZALEA
ENOTECA WINE SHOP
Please ask to our barman for our new deals

TANGERINE DREAMS
Bellagio is one of the prettiest hillside villages near Lake Como. Spend an afternoon winding around the steep, cobblestoned streets past pastel-hued houses and flowerpots that provide pops of colour. Oh, and do as the locals do, and indulge in an aperitivo. Turn to page 80 for more.

PHOTOGRAPHY EDWINA HART



The Great Escape

THERE IS A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES WITHIN OUR REACH, AND NOW IS THE TIME TO EXPERIENCE IT ALL: FROM BUCKET-LIST DESTINATIONS LONG DREAMED OF TO AMAZING JOURNEYS AND PLACES TO PUT ON YOUR RADAR FOR 2023 AND BEYOND.

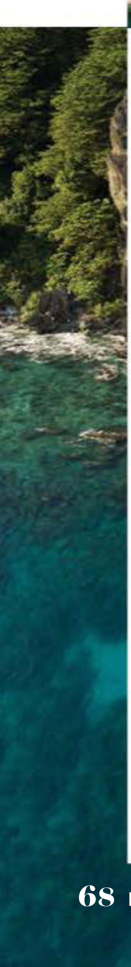
FROM LEFT: *Likuliku Lagoon Resort is an adults-only haven on Malolo Island; It's all about the daybed at this Deluxe Beachfront Bure.*

PHOTOGRAPHY HAMILTON LUND

Daydreams from a Fiji daybed

There's really no good reason for me to leave my daybed at Likuliku Lagoon Resort. In fact, I'm working out how I can stay forever. I could learn to crack open a coconut, *Cast Away*-style. But then again the platter of tropical fruit and bottle of Veuve Clicquot waiting for me on arrival in my Deluxe Beachfront Bure should help sustain me. Not to mention the jar of handmade cookies with white chocolate chips and macadamia nuts, which is replenished daily. Oh, and at a push: the resort's five-star restaurant is just a lazy saunter away through tropical gardens. Its ever-evolving menus crafted by executive chef Gregory Llewellyn – a New Yorker by way of Sydney, where he ran cult Newtown restaurant Hartsyard – let the flavours of Fiji shine in simple yet creative concoctions that I would never tire of eating.

If I really had to work, I could probably conduct all my business from here; I'll just email my boss and say I'm a digital nomad now. In my line of work, I might just get away with it so long as I can keep finding new ways to describe the scene before me: water rhythmically lapping the golden ribbon of sand that might as well be my own private beach and is all that separates me from the calm blue lagoon that lends its name to this slice of Fiji paradise. To my right, I can see the elegant arc of over-water bures that Likuliku is famous for. Offering direct access to the lagoon's vivid fringing reef, their traditional thatched forms rest gently on wooden stilts to create a light impression on this spectacular protected marine sanctuary. To my left, my own private plunge pool: a key stop on the day's itinerary of swimming, snorkelling and lounging at the daybed retreat. Later on, the sky will morph into an orange blaze; Malolo Island is known across Fiji as the island where the sun comes to rest at the end of each day. And come nightfall I could uncurl the bamboo shutters and sleep here, too: if not for the king-sized bed inside my bure proving all-too tempting. >>



Likuliku Lagoon Resort is the Fiji of daydreams: an adults-only bucket-list destination for couples, honeymooners or anyone in need of a really good holiday. It's no surprise to learn that weddings take place here regularly or that it's something of an A-list hideaway. I watch helicopters come in to land from my daybed and speculate about who their passengers might be.

Activities abound for when guests can bear to peel themselves away from their own private sanctuaries. From stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking and snorkelling close to home, to diving and riding some of the world's most famous surf breaks nearby. From hiking trails that offer aerial views over the resort and island waters, to trips to the local chiefly village of Yaro. Early-morning island-hopping boat trips take in Monuriki Island, the sybaritic spot where the Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away* was filmed and sunset cruises come complete with canapés, sparkling wine and sweet serenades. A gourmet picnic on the tiny, uninhabited Mociu Island, or Honeymoon Island, is the ultimate escape if only for a few hours.

Back at Likuliku, a presentation on its iguana conservation project offers a window into the work the resort has done to save the species on Malolo Island. It's one of many sustainability initiatives underpinning everything from the environment to people and culture that are second nature here, meaning guests can concentrate on enjoying an indulgent, guilt-free stay. I drift away further with a massage at Tatadra Spa and work lazy laps between water and sun lounger at the infinity pool.

Evenings at Likuliku take on a special kind of atmosphere. Tiki torches are lit, throwing amber reflections at the deepening water and a sultry perfume of island flowers and citronella mists the air. Dusk burns blue and orange and the heat of the day mellows into a comforting balm on your skin. Guests and staff gather at the bar at the end of the jetty every Friday night for a cocktail party hosted by resort manager Tulia Seru, who is sunshine personified. The atmosphere is animated and I fall into conversation with a couple from Australia who tell me it's their seventh time here; that it's simply their idea of a perfect holiday.

Likuliku Lagoon Resort is 100 per cent Fijian owned and the *bula* spirit of the staff is communicated through the *meke*, the traditional Fijian style of storytelling through dance and song. After a rousing number that speaks of farewells, a woman next to me is sobbing. Like many guests who have been here the whole week, it's her last night. That's the kind of fierce sense of belonging that can be engendered in a place – warm, welcoming and beautiful – like this, within only the space of a few days.

Fortunately, I still have another day here. You know where I'll be. *likulikulagoon.com – Imogen Eveson*

PHOTOGRAPHY WE ARE EXPLORERS/MATTHEW HORSPOOL (PARADISE HELICOPTERS INTERIOR); PARADISE HELICOPTERS (REMAINING PARADISE HELICOPTERS)

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HAWAIʻI ISLAND

There's nothing quite like ascending into the air and hovering over Hawaiʻi Island from above. Paradise Helicopters takes passengers on an extravagant once-in-a-lifetime journey that choppers over lush rainforest, vertiginous *pali* (sea cliffs) and pounding waves before touching down near the base of a 762-metre waterfall. En route, we see frozen lava flows on the Kona and Kohala coastlines, learn about the island's micro-climates and take a gentle hike to the base of the waterfall.

Hawaiʻi Island is the youngest and largest of the Hawaiian Islands, with scientists estimating it rose from the sea about half a million years ago. You can better connect to the *āina* (land) on a Kohala tour with Paradise Helicopters, where you can give the gift of a *hoʻokupu* (offering) and plant an endemic tree on the Island of Hawaiʻi.

Highlights of this carbon-offset helicopter ride over the mountainous landscape of the Kohala Coast also include arcing inland to where rivers of hot liquid lava have poured out over the Earth and dipping out towards the ocean to admire some of the island's black-sand beaches. The dynamic route taken from Kona Airport also takes in the dramatic emerald folds of the Kohala Valley, which has been sculpted by the elements.

Passengers onboard a Paradise Helicopters tour will also learn about the region's significance as the birthplace of Hawaiʻi's most famous *ali'I* (nobility), Kamehameha the Great.

A helicopter tour of Hawaiʻi Island is totally immersive and will place you in remote wilderness that is inaccessible by land. It's an otherworldly landscape. Play scissors, paper, rock for the window seat. *gohawaii.com; paradisecopters.com – Carla Grossetti*

AN EPIC TREK IN CHILEAN PATAGONIA

The W Trek isn't only famous for its surreal, subpolar setting, tracing the shape of a W in the foothills of Chile's iconic Torres del Paine National Park. It's also known for the wild weather hikers inevitably encounter on the 80-kilometre route, which is typically completed in four or five days. Yet the unpredictability of Chilean Patagonia only deepens your connection to this savagely beautiful landscape, crowned by the distinctive jagged peaks of the Paine Massif (pictured). And even days of horizontal rain can proffer pleasant surprises – in my case, crossing paths with a wild puma, its damp tawny fur glistening in the silvery light.

Each campsite is anchored by a rustic *refugio* (hiking lodge), some with dorm beds and rooms. After happily falling into a bed following the return slog to the national park's defining 'towers' on the first day, I opted to lighten my load by booking pre-pitched tents (with sleeping bag and mat) and all meals, a luxury sweetened by my discovery that the refugios don't only serve meals, but also pisco sours!

But you needn't camp to experience the magic of the W Trek, for a clutch of luxury eco lodges also run day hikes on sections of the trail. Among them is Tierra Patagonia (pictured above), perched above Lake Sarmiento. Dedicated to connecting guests with this wild corner of southern Chile in meaningful and sustainable ways, its ethos echoes that of its new partners – Australia's Baillie Lodges, which acquired a majority share in the Chilean boutique hotel group in 2022. *tierrahotels.com*; *lastorres.com* – *Sarah Reid*

PHOTOGRAPHY CRISTINA HARBOE T/COURTESY OF TIERRA PATAGONIA (TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK)

A scenic flight over the South Pole

We're going beyond. Beyond the penguins and icebergs that cruisers see. Beyond a glimpse of its mountainous fringes that most scenic flights witness. We're going deep, all the way to the geographic South Pole. Only a tiny few have witnessed it and I'm on the world's first commercial scenic flyover from another continent, a 16-hour round-trip from Melbourne with Chimu Adventures (fully carbon-offset). Alongside me are the travellers who have been everywhere else.

Antarctica is big – Australia would fit comfortably inside it – and so surreal it might as well be another planet. From above, shifting plates of ice create vast mosaics, the Transantarctic Mountains stretch 3500 kilometres out of sight and Mt Erebus's snowy summit hides a volcanic lake. Sheer ice cliffs plunge vertically into blue water, epic glaciers flow between mountains and the Dry Valleys are charcoal-dark and devoid of snow, so cold and windy that any ice daring to creep in instantly vaporises.

It's a visual feast narrated by the pilots who share tales of Amundsen and Scott's race to the Pole, and by a few scientists and explorers who tell us what it's like down there.

The South Pole station is marked by a cluster of buildings, its famous ceremonial striped barber pole too small to see from 5200 metres. But our journey has given us enough to grasp the meaning of this place – its grandeur, importance and fragility. We have seen and we understand. *chimuadventures.com – Laura Waters*

PHOTOGRAPHY MARTIN BENNIE (MAIN IMAGE)

Fit for a Queen in Scotland

In any other situation, walking uninvited into the Queen's residence with mud-caked boots before proceeding to bed down for the night would probably land me in a jail cell. But that's not the case at Glas-Allt-Shiel.

Glas-Allt-Shiel (pictured right) is a beautiful 19th-century lodge perched on the placid waters of Loch Muick, resting in the cusped and calloused palms of the Scottish Highlands. Built by Queen Victoria, the widowed queen retreated here while grieving the death of her husband. The lodge remains part of the royal-owned Balmoral Estate, where the royal family regularly sojourn in the summertime. And today, I am too.

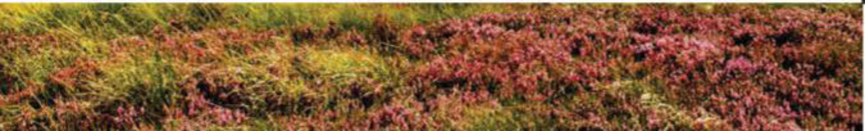
After a few hours of hugging the pristine shores of Loch Muick, I can see the stone walls of the lodge come into view – my accommodation for the night. OK, not quite. I'm headed for the mountain 'bothy' attached to the back of the building.

A bothy is a basic shelter in the Scottish wilderness, left unlocked for use by hikers, free of charge. There's a vast network of these shelters peppered across Scotland, maintained by a charity, The Mountain Bothies Association (MBA). The MBA was founded in the 1960s, preventing abandoned croft houses (farm cottages) from ruin so they could be used as shelters for 'all who love wild and lonely places'.

"We maintain a number of buildings that can be considered unique," says Neil Stewart, MBA trustee. "For example, a former school, a former water pumping station and a former coastguard station on top of a cliff on the Isle of Skye."

Glas-Allt-Shiel has to be one of the most curious bothies in the network. It is the Queen's house, after all. But when I push open the wooden door, the interior isn't exactly what you'd call regal. It's rather bare bones, with little more than a fireplace, bench and a wooden platform for sleeping. However, it's this ascetic aesthetic that forms the basis of the bothy's backcountry charms. You can't book a mountain bothy, so there's no way of knowing how many people you'll be sharing with. And, as it turns out, tonight is a full house. There are three mountaineering students from Fort William, as well as about a dozen British Army soldiers undergoing adventure training. One of the mountaineering students has hiked in with an acoustic guitar. I curl up in my sleeping bag and drift off to the sounds of his strumming overlaid by the crackling of the fire.

Come morning, I'm greeted with a resplendent view of the highlands, framed by the glittering loch. In the height of summer, the heather is in full bloom, softening the slopes of craggy mountains like a great purple shag carpet. In the woodlands behind the bothy, pine trees splice streams of sunlight into ribbons, sending them dancing upon the surface of rushing streams. It's no five-star hotel – but it's a landscape fit for a queen. *mountainbothies.org.uk – Elizabeth Whitehead*



Finding the best of Europe in the small island nation of Malta

The Mediterranean island nation of Malta is easily Europe's most eclectic. A melting pot of cultures, the idyllic landscape is dotted with prehistoric temples, Roman ruins, Middle Age medinas and medieval architecture to boot. Wandering about the island feels like you've cut through the strata of time like a tiramisu, scooping out a delicious bite of history that extends back to some of the world's earliest known structures.

One of these is Hagar Qim, a megalithic temple that overlooks the opalescent sea on Malta's south coast. Built more than 5000 years ago, the temple is shrouded in mystery, its stone walls serving as a *tabula rasa* (clean slate) for visitors to imagine the life and times of early civilisation. After wandering through its ancient chambers, I hike down to the water to witness another of Malta's exquisite gems – its world-class snorkelling and diving. Through my snorkel mask, I'm launched into another world entirely, where fish flit about a kaleidoscope of coral and octopi propel past me like aquatic jets. Down the road, boats ferry tourists around the Blue Grotto, a series of sea caves where underwater flora projects a phosphorescent glow onto the walls. All this and I haven't even left this tiny corner of the island.

The next days are spent pottering around the old cities of Mdina and Valletta, gorging on *pastizzi* (a popular Maltese street food of spiced peas or ricotta ensconced in a flaky pastry crust) and taking in architecture that spans millennia. The highlight is the small but impressive St John's Co-Cathedral, where tapestries, elaborate marblework and gold flourishes rival some of Europe's finest interiors. But the crown jewel is an original Caravaggio masterpiece displayed in the Oratory, painted when the artist took refuge on the island. With St John's, as well as the rest of Malta, the old adage certainly holds true: sometimes the best things come in small packages. *visitmalta.com – Elizabeth Whitehead*

PHOTOGRAPHY CARLA GROSSETTI (ON SAFARI WITH BENCH AFRICA)

A SAFARI FOR THE SOUL IN AFRICA

It's the unexpected and of-the-moment encounters that I remember most vividly about my dream safari holiday to South Africa and Kenya with Bench Africa. It's spotting a pride of lions lolling in the tall grass, their manes honeyed by the last light of day. Seeing a hyena hangdogging down a dirt track at dawn and sending puffs of dust into the air. Spotting the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and African buffalo) within days of arriving at Garonga Safari Camp in Makalali reserve was, of course, bucket-list stuff. But so was soaring over the Great Rift Valley in Kenya in a Cessna 208 Caravan.

Another highlight was simply making friends with Wilson, an *askari* (Maasai warrior) charged with maintaining security at Mara Ngenche Camp in Kenya. Each night, Wilson would wrap himself tightly in a colourful blanket and sit outside my tent armed with an *assegai* (spear). The safari camp was located at the confluence of the Mara and Talek rivers in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, which was teeming with crocodiles and hippos. I learnt to say '*Nao gopa kiboko*' (I'm scared of hippos') in Swahili for the sole purpose of making Wilson smile. My fumbled attempts at the language were met with great warmth.

Meeting my adopted elephant Kiasa at the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage in Nairobi was also a profound experience. But it wasn't until my last night in Kenya, when I folded the binoculars back into the case and sat watching the colour drain from the sky, that I realised how important all that stillness is while on safari. The quietude is not just effective for spotting shapes moving in the grass. Being on safari is about living in the moment. And for that, it's as transformative as travel can be. *benchafrica.com – Carla Grossetti*

An island-hopping expedition in Palawan

As someone who can feel woozy at the mere sight of a boat, sailing off into the sunset isn't usually my idea of a good time. But when I stumbled across social-enterprise business Tao Philippines, which runs multi-day island-hopping expeditions in collaboration with local communities, the opportunity to sustainably explore the Philippines' idyllic island province of Palawan was too enticing to pass up.

Before I knew it, I was boarding a *bangka* (motorised double outrigger) in the tourist hub of Coron, bound for a castaway adventure. We'd spend the next five days gliding across the blissfully peaceful aquamarine waters of northern Palawan, pausing to snorkel atop remote coral reefs and wriggle our toes in the sugar-white sands of uninhabited islands. In the afternoons, we'd anchor near one of Tao's 15 base camps dotted across the archipelago and 'check in' to our accommodation – a string of simple-looking but surprisingly comfortable bamboo huts, engineer-designed for tropical beach camping.

Most itineraries visit Tao Beach Farm, the heart of Tao's positive-impact purpose. Here, the camp doubles as a learning centre for communities, replete with an organic farm, massage centre and farm-to-table restaurant where our wonderful crew of 'Lost Boys' – recruited from local fishing villages – were trained to cook the wholesome Filipino-style meals we savoured throughout the expedition.

Camps have freshwater showers and flushing toilets, which is where the traditional luxuries typically end. But I couldn't have wanted for anything more as I watched the sun dance across the South China Sea just metres from my mattress on those lazy expedition mornings. *taophilippines.com – Sarah Reid*

PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT SPORLEDER/@SPOART (TAO PHILIPPINES)

THE PARTY OF A LIFETIME IN RIO

There are a few exceptional sights on the planet that make any traveller's heart soar when setting eyes on them for the very first time – the likes of Machu Picchu, the Pyramids of Giza, the Taj Mahal. I'm standing on the deck of the *Azamara Pursuit* as the ship slowly glides into the port of Rio de Janeiro when I spot one of these Seven Wonders of the World – the iconic 38-metre Christ the Redeemer statue dramatically perched atop Mt Corcovado with its arms outstretched over the sprawling Brazilian metropolis. Arriving by sea on the Carnival in Rio voyage from Buenos Aires reveals the city's splendour before we even step on its sun-drenched shores.

Known as *Cidade Maravilhosa*, Portuguese for 'Marvellous City', Rio de Janeiro is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, where lush tropical rainforest-cloaked mountains meet the sea and pastel-hued *favelas* cling to the hillside. Our ship is docked in Rio for several days in February during the biggest event in the Brazilian calendar – Rio Carnival. I'm set to soak up some local *carioca* culture as I join more than two million people each day flocking the streets for Carnival celebrations that begin on the Friday before Ash Wednesday, with the festivities reaching a climax on 'Fat Tuesday'. Carnival uniquely combines the Catholic tradition of pre-Lenten celebration brought by the Portuguese colonisers in the 18th century with samba, a musical style that is deeply rooted in Afro-Brazilian culture. Today, Rio de Janeiro hosts the most famous carnival in the world and one of the greatest parties on the planet.

I've chosen Azamara's walking tour, Secrets of Old Rio, to get myself acquainted with the city. One of the world's largest murals, the rainbow-hued 190-metre-long masterpiece by Eduardo Kobra is the first thing to welcome us as we disembark at the palm tree-lined Praça Mauá port. We are near one of the biggest arrival points into Brazil during the slave trade, Valongo Wharf, where almost one million enslaved Africans landed on Rio de Janeiro's coast. Many eventually settled in this part of town, known as Little Africa. We pass the historic Pedra do Sol, the site of a former slave market, which is considered by many as the 'birthplace' of Samba. The dance, characterised by fast footwork and rhythmical hips, has become synonymous with Brazilian identity.

It's Sunday, and the streets are alive with the spirit of Carnival. By the time we reach Praça XV, we've seen an array of eccentric fancy-dress

>>

costumes, or '*fantasia*'. I notice a few revellers wearing vibrant veils, which our guide explains is an ode to the urban legend of a Carmelite nun who jumped over the walls of a cloistered convent in Santa Teresa to join in the revelry of Carnival.

Our next stop is the stunning Mosteiro de São Bento, built by Benedictine monks in the 16th century – the Baroque interiors are dripping in gold. I'm struggling to sit still in the pews as I feel the thrum of samba carrying through the air, and I'm beginning to empathise with the runaway nun.

Continuing our walk, we attempt to cross the wide Rio Branco Avenue. Suddenly our small group finds itself swept up in the swirl of sequins, feathers and glitter. The pace of the drums seemingly quickens as the crowd surges around us. Hundreds of *blocos*, or block parties, are held all over the city's neighbourhoods during Carnival. There are five blocos in Centro today and the tour has accidentally joined one.

As entertaining as we find the crowds – pirates, priests, performers stretching to the sky on stilts, and all sorts of creative ensembles of scantily clad men and women sweating it out in Rio's soaring temperatures – they seem to find a bevy of bewildered tourists just as amusing. "Where are you from?" they laugh as our ordinary clothes give us away. A girl dressed as an angel produces a little pot of silver glitter. She anoints me in a faux ceremonial manner, smearing sparkles onto my cheeks.

Those seeking the quintessential Carnival experience book tickets to the extravagant annual pageant hosted at the Sambadrome. The purpose-built 'stadium of samba', designed by world-renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer is flanked with seats that can hold up to 90,000 spectators.

Ticket prices to the official parade vary, from grandstand seats to lounge access, which can set you back more than $1000. You're guaranteed excellent views and a bar in the VIP section where you can order endless *caipirinha* – Brazil's national beverage made with *cachaça* (a local liquor distilled from fermented sugarcane juice) and lime.

The main event runs over two consecutive nights as 12 of the best samba schools compete for the crown. It takes around an hour for about 3500 to 4000 members of each samba school (*escola)* to perform. It's a once-in-a-life spectacle of gigantic floats, percussion bands and sizzling-hot samba dancers wearing dazzling headdresses. Our local guide Paulo explains: "Each of the samba schools develops a theme. It's almost like an opera

where they are telling a story." It takes 365 days to prepare for the one big day and tonight is their night to shine. The energy is palpable. The grandstands erupt with roars as Brazilians sing along and cheer on their favourite samba school with a passion rarely seen outside of a football game. There's an explosion of bejewelled costumes and glittering confetti as the elaborate floats pass us by. The parade shows no signs of slowing down until sunrise.

"Carnival is officially five days and we hear which samba school is the winner on Ash Wednesday. People are frantic to see who wins. They are glued to their television screens," Paulo adds.

Despite my lack of sleep, I'm eager to sightsee the next day. It takes 20 minutes for the tram to climb through the thick tropical Tijuca Rainforest to reach the summit of Mt Corcovado. The towering Art Deco statue of Jesus Christ dwarfs all in its shadow; it's an engineering marvel that's been watching over the city since 1931.

Afterwards, we stop for a *churrascaria* lunch at Fogo de Chão, an authentic Brazilian eatery overlooking Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain). All-you-can-eat barbecued meat is carved tableside, such as the highly prized *picanha*, accompanied by fresh salads. The papaya cream, a dessert made from blending papaya with vanilla ice-cream, is drowned in blackcurrant liquor.

With Carnival comes the crowds, resulting in lengthy queues for the two-part cable car to the granite peak of Sugarloaf Mountain, 395 metres above Rio. The city's lofty landmark gained its name during the heyday of the sugarcane trade. It offers breathtaking panoramic views over Rio de Janeiro.

It's our last day in town and I have one last mission in mind to complete the tourist trifecta – Copacabana Beach. The four-kilometre stretch of golden sand is more than just the enduring symbol of Rio; it's the lifeblood of the city. This prime people-watching position is Rio's very own playground, where I simply sit back and order an ice-cold caipirinha from one of the kiosks.

Kids from the favela practise their football skills. A procession of bronzed beach babes saunters by. Leathery-skinned fishermen heave old wooden boats into the water. And vendors comb the beach selling everything from fresh coconuts to grilled lobster.

Copacabana is the perfect place to cool off in summer. I dip my toes in the sparkling Atlantic Ocean. It's a moment to refresh before joining the next bloco. I can already feel the infectious beat of the drums calling from across the sand. *azamara.com – Edwina Hart* **IT**

Azamara's next 12-Night Carnival in Rio voyage departs Buenos Aires and sails to Uruguay and Brazil.

THIS PAGE: *Delicious Italian antipasti and cocktails served on the sunny terrace at Grand Hotel Tremezzo's T Bar.* **OPPOSITE:** *Striped sun loungers in Aperol spritz hues are perched on the shores of shimmering Lake Como at Grand Hotel Tremezzo.*

MUCH MORE THAN A SIMPLE *VACANZA*, A GLAMOROUS GETAWAY ON THE SHORES OF LAKE COMO IS THE ULTIMATE DIVERSION FROM THE EVERYDAY AND AN IMMERSION IN THE MAGIC OF TRUE ITALIAN HOSPITALITY.

Italian *Idyll*

Words & photography **EDWINA HART**

***Villeggiatura* is more than a simple *vacanza*. It's a diversion from daily life. To rest and relax, embrace a slower pace, enrich the soul and deeply connect with a destination.**

Long before the concept of 'slow travel' became a modern trend, the Italians had the tradition of *villeggiatura*: a word that dates back to Renaissance Italy, when Venetians sought a change of scenery, escaping Venice in favour of a summer villa. It's more than a simple *vacanza*. It's an extended stay in one place, a diversion from daily life. To rest and relax, embrace a slower pace, enrich the soul and deeply connect with a destination.

It's intrinsically Italian, and there's no finer locale than Lake Como to truly escape. So, I'm setting off for Italy's most beguiling body of water, a little more than an hour's drive north of Milan. The plan? Well, that's precisely the point – there isn't one. The next few days will unfold as I give in to the languid Lago di Como experience, ensconced in two of the lake's most luxurious hotels: the iconic Grand Hotel Tremezzo and the brand-new sister property, Passalacqua. >>

THIS PAGE: *Grand Hotel Tremezzo's floating pool.* **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left): *Grand Hotel Tremezzo's spa; Guests are whisked around Passalacqua in an open-top Fiat 500; Exploring Lake Como's towns in a vintage* battello *(boat).*

FROM LEFT: *Lunch at Passalacqua is fresh and unfussy; Live* la dolce vita *at the hotel's chic pool.* **OPPOSITE:** *A few doors down from Grand Hotel Tremezzo, the 16th-century aristocratic residence Villa Sola Cabiati can be rented out for an ultra-private stay.*

LAKE COMO

There's a mystique to Italy's loveliest lake, located in the foothills of the Italian Alps, dotted with lavish *palazzi* and terracotta roof-topped towns. The province has attracted artists and aristocrats for centuries. Lake Como's fabled legacy of pleasure-seekers can be traced to the second century as a Roman holiday resort, and later a stop on the Grand Tour undertaken by the upper classes of the 18th and 19th centuries. It was a favourite Hollywood haunt during the 1950s before a modern-day revival as the playground of the rich and famous – dubbed the 'George Clooney effect' after the lake's most feted resident.

PASSALACQUA

It's a stormy October afternoon when I arrive at Passalacqua on the shores of Lake Como. The grand iron gates creak open to reveal an 18th-century villa with sage-green shutters set among verdant tiered gardens that cascade to the waterfront. I'm warmly greeted by the staff with a posy of freshly picked flowers and handed a heavy brass key to my room at the enchanting 24-suite hideaway. The historic estate has hosted notable guests from Napoleon and Winston Churchill to composer Vincenzo Bellini, who was inspired to write two operas during his stay.

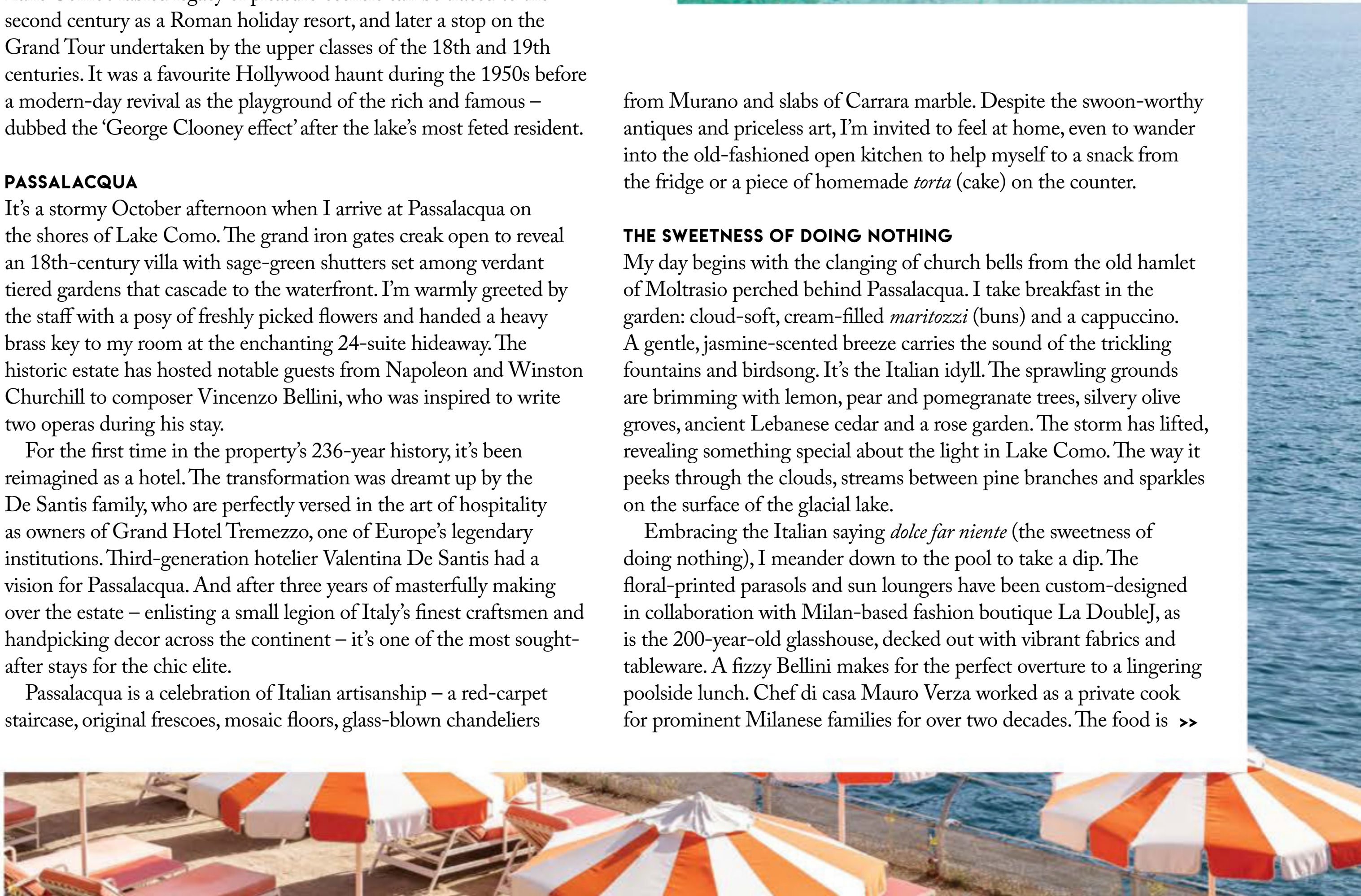
For the first time in the property's 236-year history, it's been reimagined as a hotel. The transformation was dreamt up by the De Santis family, who are perfectly versed in the art of hospitality as owners of Grand Hotel Tremezzo, one of Europe's legendary institutions. Third-generation hotelier Valentina De Santis had a vision for Passalacqua. And after three years of masterfully making over the estate – enlisting a small legion of Italy's finest craftsmen and handpicking decor across the continent – it's one of the most sought-after stays for the chic elite.

Passalacqua is a celebration of Italian artisanship – a red-carpet staircase, original frescoes, mosaic floors, glass-blown chandeliers from Murano and slabs of Carrara marble. Despite the swoon-worthy antiques and priceless art, I'm invited to feel at home, even to wander into the old-fashioned open kitchen to help myself to a snack from the fridge or a piece of homemade *torta* (cake) on the counter.

THE SWEETNESS OF DOING NOTHING

My day begins with the clanging of church bells from the old hamlet of Moltrasio perched behind Passalacqua. I take breakfast in the garden: cloud-soft, cream-filled *maritozzi* (buns) and a cappuccino. A gentle, jasmine-scented breeze carries the sound of the trickling fountains and birdsong. It's the Italian idyll. The sprawling grounds are brimming with lemon, pear and pomegranate trees, silvery olive groves, ancient Lebanese cedar and a rose garden. The storm has lifted, revealing something special about the light in Lake Como. The way it peeks through the clouds, streams between pine branches and sparkles on the surface of the glacial lake.

Embracing the Italian saying *dolce far niente* (the sweetness of doing nothing), I meander down to the pool to take a dip. The floral-printed parasols and sun loungers have been custom-designed in collaboration with Milan-based fashion boutique La DoubleJ, as is the 200-year-old glasshouse, decked out with vibrant fabrics and tableware. A fizzy Bellini makes for the perfect overture to a lingering poolside lunch. Chef di casa Mauro Verza worked as a private cook for prominent Milanese families for over two decades. The food is >>



FROM LEFT: *Breakfast with lake views at Grand Hotel Tremezzo; The opulent Suite Bellini at Passalacqua.* **OPPOSITE:** *Embrace the Italian art of* dolce far niente *or 'doing nothing' at Passalacqua's pool, complete with custom-designed parasols and sun loungers.*

gorgeously garden-fresh and unfussy. I tuck into fried calamari and zucchini flowers, ribbons of *culatello* (salumi) with winter melon and twirled forkfuls of spaghetti pomodoro.

The best way to see Lake Como is on the water. I discover the underground passage that emerges at Passalacqua's private dock and hop onto the vintage motor launch, decked out in lemony yellow Loro Piana fabric. The boat is skippered by Bepe, who's been zipping along the lake for almost 40 years. As we glide along the water – smooth like the famed Como silk – he points out George Clooney's Villa Oleandra in the actor's adopted hometown of Laglio. The lake is edged with autumnal burnt orange-tinged forests and storybook villages such as vine-clad Nesso, with swans swimming beneath the stone footbridge.

A MUSICAL MUSE

This evening I venture into the cosmopolitan town of Como for a piano recital at the neoclassical Teatro Sociale, an opera house with crimson interiors reminiscent of Milan's La Scala. I take a behind-the-scenes tour with a local guide who points to a gold-framed painting of a beautiful raven-haired woman in a velvet dress. "That's a portrait of Giuditta Pasta, also known as Casta Diva", she says. The celebrated 19th-century soprano also happened to be the muse of opera composer Bellini. "You are staying at Passalacqua? It was the villa of Bellini at that time. Across the lake, there is Villa Casta Diva. Legend says that he would play the piano from his villa, and she would sing from the other side of the lake. She inspired [the opera] *Norma*."

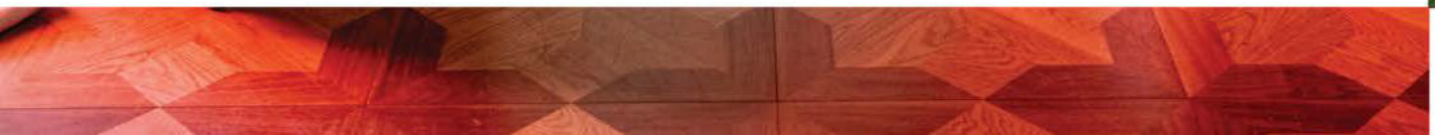
That night, as I drift off to sleep enveloped in the Beltrami bed linen – made from white birch fibres said to be softer than silk – I dream of hearing Bellini's aria floating across the lake.

GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO

While Passalacqua is a hidden paradise, Grand Hotel Tremezzo is the place to see and be seen. It's a smooth ride to the town of Tremezzo in the back of a Maserati, taking a winding route along the shoreline before I finally set eyes on the hotel's unmistakable facade.

The 90-room Art Nouveau masterpiece has been charming holidaymakers since 1910. It still exudes the golden-age glamour of Greta Garbo's 'happy, sunny place' from the 1932 film *Grand Hotel*. On this blue-sky day, I've decided that it's my happy, sunny place, too. A floating pool sits on the lake, fringed by retro Italian Riviera-esque striped sun loungers on a stretch of real sand. The colour palette is Aperol spritz, which also happens to be the cocktail du jour of the sunbathers wearing silk headscarves and Gucci sunglasses.

The architecture fits squarely in the genre of the grand-hotel style of the early 20th century (think: Wes Anderson's film *The Grand Budapest Hotel*). I ride the glass-and-brass elevator – a portal into a playful, pastel-hued lobby – and check into my suite, which is lavishly appointed with a gilded bedframe >>



That night, as I drift off to sleep enveloped in the Beltrami bed linen – made from white birch fibres said to be softer than silk – I dream of hearing Bellini's aria floating across the lake.

and a bathroom dripping in marble. Sumptuous curtains open onto a Juliette balcony with postcard views.

VINTAGE BOAT RIDE

I'd already heard enthusiastic whispers about the extravagant breakfast buffet at Grand Hotel Tremezzo – and it did not disappoint. It's fig season, so I tear into the deliciously sweet fruit and pastries before skipping down to the pier, where a handsome Venetian-built boat awaits me. It's Lake Como's version of a limousine. We speed towards one of the region's most cinematic locations, Villa del Balbianello, where whimsically sculpted gardens festoon the promontory. The backdrop is recognisable from both *Star Wars* and James Bond's *Casino Royale*. It's exhilarating – with the wind in my hair and a glass of prosecco in hand.

BELLAGIO

When I stand on my suite's balcony, the town of Bellagio beckons from across the water. Conveniently, the ferry wharf is a moment's walk away from the hotel, so I ride the 20-minute *battello* (boat) bound for the 'Pearl of Lake Como' where the wishbone-shaped lake forks. It's one of the prettiest towns in Europe, with narrow side streets awash in shades of limoncello, peach and apricot with shuttered windows adorned with geraniums, as well as fashion boutiques, cafes, *pasticceria* and wine bars to while away the afternoon.

THE TERRACE

As the golden-hued afternoon slinks into a sultry evening, it would be unconscionable not to enjoy an aperitivo on the terrace at T Bar where a honey-voiced performer tinkers on the piano. By the time the moonlight has cast a silvery lustre over the lake, the night progresses to the patio of La Terrazza Gualtiero Marchesi, where the tables are a sea of twinkling candle-lit Murano glassware. The restaurant has the privilege of serving the signature dishes of the late chef Gualtiero Marchesi, known as the maestro of Italian cuisine. The pièce de résistance is the saffron risotto crowned with a sheet of 24-carat gold leaf from Florence – a dish worthy of the splendid backdrop.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

In the spirit of espousing my slow-paced villeggiatura, I extend my sojourn for another few days at Passalacqua. "You're back. Welcome home!" one of the white-jacketed waitstaff smiles while swiftly delivering my coffee granita at breakfast. It's funny that one should feel so at home in what could quite possibly be the most beautiful villa in Lombardy, but somehow, I do. That's the magic of true Italian hospitality. **IT**

A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

The nearest airport is Milan Malpensa, around an hour's drive to Lake Como. The lake is also easily accessible by train; it's a 40-minute journey from Milano Centrale station to Como San Giovanni station in Como's town centre. The tourism season begins in March.

STAYING THERE

Passalacqua
This hotly anticipated boutique hotel opened in summer 2022. It's now one of the lake's most fashionable addresses. You can stay in the main Villa, the Palazz (fashioned from the former horse stables) or the four-bedroom Casa al Lago by the water's edge. *passalacqua.it/en*

Grand Hotel Tremezzo
The grand dame of Lake Como is more than a five-star hotel. The family-run property boasts five stylish restaurants and bars, three pools (including one that floats on the lake) and an award-winning spa for movie star treatment. The lakeside location in the town of Tremezzo makes this hotel a convenient base for those keen to explore. *grandhoteltremezzo.com/en*

Villa Sola Cabiati
Located a few doors down from Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Villa Sola Cabiati is an opulent and ultra-private option for those travelling in a group or wedding party. The 16th-century aristocratic residence has six rooms that can accommodate up to 12 guests – and you'll be looked after by a dedicated team of staff, including a butler. *grandhoteltremezzo.com/en/our-villa/villa-sola-cabiati*

EATING THERE

Restaurant Kitchen
This elegant Michelin-starred restaurant is nestled in a private park in front of the Sheraton Hotel Como. Expect creative Italian cuisine with seasonal ingredients plucked from the kitchen's biodynamic garden. *kitchencomo.com*

Gelateria Le Giuggiole
This tiny gelateria is located above Passalacqua in the village of Moltrasio. The sugary scent of waffle cones wafts up the stone-paved path, tempting all who stroll by. Opt for a scoop of the salted pistachio ice-cream or the seasonal pear sorbet. *facebook.com/GelateriaLeGiuggiole*

DRINKING THERE

T Bar
Located at Grand Hotel Tremezzo, this is the bar of your Lake Como dreams. Expect extraordinary views, a convivial atmosphere and expertly made cocktails. For a twist on an Aperol spritz, try the refreshing Spritz GHT with notes of pink grapefruit and rosemary. *grandhoteltremezzo.com/en/gourmet-experience/t-bar/*

PLAYING THERE

Visit Villa Carlotta
The former marquis' mansion-turned-museum is home to some wonderful Canova sculptures. However, it's really about the eight-hectare botanic gardens with more than 150 different species of plants. Springtime is a riot of colour. *online.villacarlotta.it/en*

Explore Villa del Balbianello
The guided tour provides a fascinating glimpse into the life of the villa's last resident, Count Guido Monzino – an explorer who led the first Italian expedition to climb Mt Everest in the 1970s. The interiors are a treasure trove of memorabilia he collected on his far-flung adventures to Africa, the Himalayas and frozen polar regions. *fondoambiente.it/villa-del-balbianello-eng*

Take a pizza-making class
Grand Hotel Tremezzo guests can learn the secrets of cooking authentic Italian pizza – made with stone-ground flour, fresh tomato sauce and buffalo mozzarella – under the guidance of *pizzaioli* (pizza chefs) at poolside restaurant T Pizza.

Spa Treatment at T Spa
The exquisitely redesigned T Spa at Grand Hotel Tremezzo boasts products exclusively used by only a handful of select hotels – the Florentine beauty brand Santa Maria Novella can trace its roots back to 1221.

Shop at Pierangelo Masciadri
Como was a renowned silk producer for centuries. Stop by the Pierangelo Masciadri store in Bellagio, which stocks everything from scarves and handbags to shirts and ties. *pmartemoda.com/en*

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Grand Hotel Tremezzo is the grand dame of Lake Como; Bellagio is one of the lake's prettiest villages.* **OPPOSITE:** *Villa del Balbianello has been used as the setting for well-known movies, such as* Casino Royale.

APERITIVI
WINE BAR

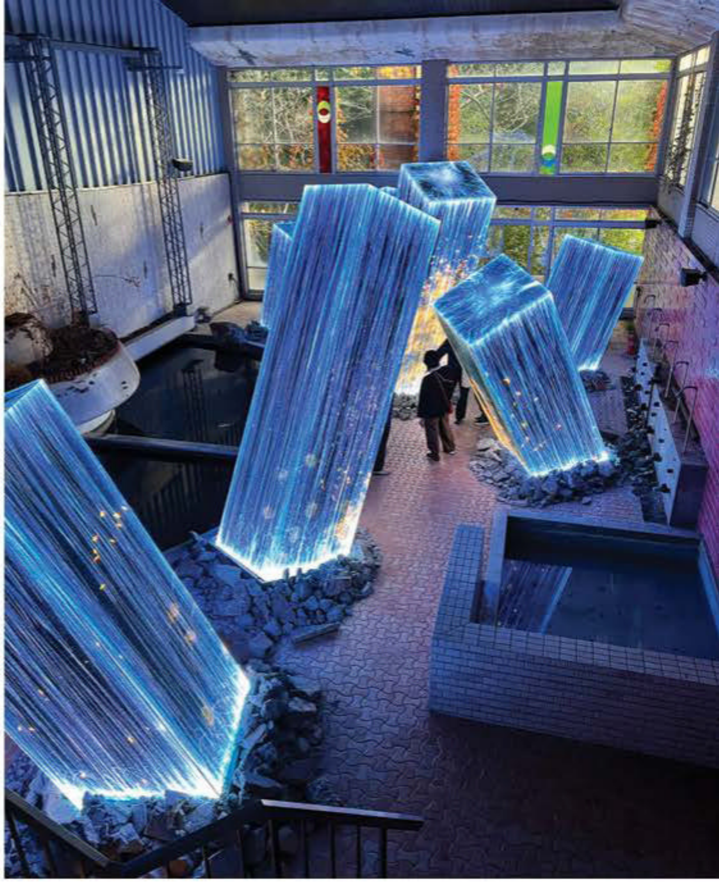
The otherworldly teamLab installation Ruins and Heritage: Rinkan Spa & Tea Ceremony *at Mifuneyama Rakuen Hotel in Saga Prefecture.*

The *finer* details

ON A JAPANESE ISLAND OF BEHEMOTH VOLCANIC MOUNTAINS AND ENDLESS SEAS, HUGE ALLURES CAN BE FOUND IN THE SMALL AND THE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED.

Words **LEIGH-ANN POW**

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF TEAMLAB



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Mifuneyama Rakuen Gardens were created in 1845; A former mountain spa plays host to an installation by one of the hottest art collectives in the world; The transient garden is captivating in all seasons, from the vibrant azaleas blooming in spring to rich shades of autumn.*

Mifuneyama Rakuen is a pleasure garden sprawling over 500,000 square metres at the base of Mt Mifune in Saga Prefecture on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Created for the former feudal lord Shigeyoshi Nabeshima in 1845, the position of the garden was brilliantly calculated; the mountain creates the perfect backdrop, appearing to be part of the garden without the burden – or price tag – of ownership. The 'borrowed' panorama creates a stunning first impression, and while the azaleas that drench the garden in colour during spring are absent, the vivid autumn hues of orange, yellow and red are equally arresting.

Wandering the tiered terraces, weaving through a maze of low-manicured hedges, I am blissfully engulfed in the silence and solitude of nature, removed from the technology and affections of the modern as if I have stepped back in time. Then I see it, an unassuming sign, almost apologetic in its humbleness: teamLabs Ruins and Heritage. In the middle of a garden in the middle of the mountains in the middle of an island, I have happened upon an installation by the hottest digital art collective in the world.

I'm amazed, then I am enthralled. The collective's signature dancing digital light displays have been installed in an abandoned and dilapidated mid-20th century spa. In an old public bath, the long-empty soaking pools and tiled floors are the canvas for vivid patterns that explode and writhe beneath my feet, as if responding to my presence. In another room – complete with its original shower heads protruding from the walls – giant columns jut diagonally from the rubble of the site, slowly morphing in colour.

I head deeper into the experience, down a dimly lit, alarmingly crumbling, disconcertingly inclined corridor towards a virtual flame at the bottom. Moving on, I suddenly find myself in a corridor of numbered rooms with people navigating their suitcases through sliding shoji screens; for a split second I think this is all part of the show, but it seems I have breached an invisible line between the ruins and the functional. I follow the arrows marking the route to the next installation, a mirrored room filled with hanging lights that wax and wane between shades of cream, red and soft green. It takes me a moment to realise that I am standing in the lobby of a functioning mountain retreat, complete with a discreet check-in desk.

My unexpected diversion through a world-class art installation in a blissful mountain setting becomes a metaphor for my time on Kyushu. The third largest in the collection of four main islands that make up Japan, Kyushu is spread over seven prefectures – Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Oita, Miyazaki and Kagoshima – but is easily traversed. The island has an outsized reputation, founded in violent volcanic eruptions and seething fissures that cut deep into the flesh of the landscape, but as I explore, I find the immensity of its allures in its finer details; the surprising, the small, the singular.

THE SMALL

Full disclosure: I love Japan. I have been returning to the country as if drawn to it by an invisible thread since my first visit as a teenager.

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PHOTOGRAPHY LEIGH-ANN POW (TEAMLAB ART INSTALLATION AND DETAILS)

PHOTOGRAPHY LEIGH-ANN POW (CERAMICS, TOUR GUIDE TSUNODA SHUJI)

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Steam rises from Unzen Hot Springs near Nagasaki; The sartorial style of guide Tsunoda Shuji reflects the autumnal colours of Mt Myokendake.* **OPPOSITE:** *The artist responsible for crafting these stunning ceramics is also responsible for making the soba noodles served at Noritou, a studio-cum-restaurant near Arita in Saga Prefecture.*

In that time, I have island-hopped in Okinawa Prefecture, woken before the sun to sit in quiet reverence with chanting monks in Koyasan in Wakayama Prefecture, and travelled to the Oga Peninsula in Akita Prefecture to chase ogre (at the annual Namahage Festival). But surprisingly, I have never been to Kyushu.

I've dreamed of it though, largely due to its celebrated ceramics fairs, the principal one of which is held in the town of Arita, Saga Prefecture, during Japan's Golden Week holidays from late April to early May. I arrive in the town on the last day of the Autumn Ceramics Fair in late November (all ceramics fairs are good ceramics fairs as far as I am concerned), smaller but no less captivating.

With a storied history of pottery makers and kilns, the main thoroughfare of Arita's old town is delightful in its modest proportions and Studio Ghibli-esque charm, lined with a hotchpotch of patinaed historic shops, their windows filled with blue and white ceramic designs, their footpaths crowded with baskets and shelves filled with teacups, dishes and bowls in a multitude of patterns. The largely septuagenarian volunteers, pointing people in the direction of local restaurants and pottery workshops, huddle near a giant 1000-year-old ginkgo tree, its delicate golden leaves creating a luminous halo around its base as they flutter to the ground.

I take a pottery class under the tutelage of a gorgeously enthusiastic young artist at Pottery Studio Rokuroza, where, after donning an apron and wildly unflattering protective trousers and choosing a design (I opt to make a small pouring vessel, which will be glazed a gentle, creamy blue after I leave), I sit at a wheel nervously working the silky local clay this way and that. In case the result of my handiwork is less than display quality, I rifle through some bargain baskets to find a few Y300 (roughly $3) cups to take home.

A resolutely modern end to the quaint delights of Arita comes when I check into arita huis, a sleekly minimalist boutique hotel surrounded by a collective of ceramics stores, that would be at home in the design-conscious neighbourhoods of Tokyo or Kyoto. A riot of concrete and blond wood, the sleek, clean lines in the lobby space are offset by an architectural *ikebana* (Japanese art of flower arranging) display at the entrance and a pool of small, floating ceramic orbs which create a quietly lyrical soundscape as they gently bounce off each other as the water shifts almost imperceptibly. In my loft-style room I sleep contentedly, before waking to an exquisitely presented traditional Japanese breakfast of grilled fish and rice served at a communal table in the lobby.

THE SURPRISING

Much has been made of Kyushu's volatile volcanic foundations, with the island continuously bubbling, seething and belching steam and heat. Oita Prefecture's Chinoike Jigoku or Blood Pond Hell has become the embodiment of the island's geological capriciousness, but a slightly less ominous take on the constant natural drama can be had in Unzen Onsen in Nagsaki Prefecture.

Part of the sprawling Unzen-Amakusa National Park, even the most cursory walk around this compact hot spring town, with its vintage corner store, toy shop and restaurants serving up colourful bowls of champon, a noodle soup that is a speciality of Nagasaki Prefecture, will offer up the sight (and pungent aroma) of steaming *jigoku* (hell) hot springs. While most come here to soak in the mineral-rich waters, one of the most breathtaking experiences is a ride on the Nita Pass Ropeway.

A cable car by any other name, the adorable red cabin of the ropeway is like something straight out of the 1950s, so I appreciate the sartorial efforts of my guide for the day, Mr Tsunoda Shuji, who turns up wearing tweed and a jaunty little hat for our excursion. >>

The 500-metre ride up Mt Myokendake from Nita Pass takes three minutes, delivering me to 1300 metres above sea level. While the low clouds restrict my view on the pass side of the mountain, I find diversion in walking the short, narrow trails that lace the hardy foliage. At the end of one, I find a stunning view of an autumn-hued valley and a tiny honour box of fortunes (*omikuji*). I pay Y100 ($1) and unravel my fortune – a good one according to Shuji-san – and then tie it to the branch of a tree to magnify its effect, allowing the good luck to waft on the mountain breeze to whatever being of providence will now watch over me to make it a reality.

A stop at Fugendake, one of the main peaks of Mt Unzen, provides a view of one of the newest mountain peaks in Japan: Heisei-Shinzan. Formed almost overnight when lava pushed up from the Earth's core as Mt Unzen rumbled and erupted in the 1990s, the before and after photographs are surprising evidence of Kyushu's ever-changing topography as a result of fire and fury.

THE SINGULAR

The beauty of travelling in Japan is in the diversity of experiences to be had, often rendered singular by their unique regionality. This thought crosses my mind as I sit on a low, flat boat floating through Fukuoka Prefecture's 'Little Venice'.

The quiet, tree-lined waterways of Yanagawa are actually the remnants of the defensive moats that once protected this historic former castle town. The castle, originally built in 1588 and known as the 'water castle', was eventually decommissioned in 1873, but the snaking canal system it fostered remains.

Settling into place, our expert oarsman launches his boat (*donkobune*) away from the edge of the water and plunges his long bamboo pole into its depths. As the mellow autumn sunshine glistens and glints off the surface, we glide past waterside parks and walkways, and skinny little houses that represent Yanagawa's version of waterfront living. Rambling bushes, weeping willows and flowering trees line the route, introducing delightful bursts of colour, while in other stretches distinctive sea cucumber walls (*namako kabe*), created in a crosshatch pattern of white and grey, appear at the water's edge.

Suddenly, our oarsman bursts into song, reciting the melodic poems composed by Hakushu Kitahara. His tenor is matched by his expertise at navigating the many bridges that span the moats, many requiring a low duck to clear; technique is also required to punt the wide bridges without becoming stranded halfway.

My journey comes to an end at the grand Tachibana Ohuna, the traditional home of the Tachibana family, where I am served a lunch of eel, steamed over rice and presented in a lacquerware box – a Yanagawa speciality – while overlooking a manicured garden.

A small town bustling with creativity, a violent and surprising change to an already dramatic landscape, a singular meal after a unique experience; the glory is indeed in the (finer) detail in Kyushu. **IT**

PHOTOGRAPHY LEIGH-ANN POW (ISLANDS, PARK SIGN, CANAL STORE, DETAIL)

NATIONAL PARK
雲仙
妙見岳山頂
1,333M

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Drifting fortunes at the top of Nita Pass; Nita Pass Ropeway; A canal-side store offers refreshments to those cruising Yanagawa's canals.* **OPPOSITE:** *Kyushu is surrounded by endless seas dotted with countless islands, as seen looking out to Kujukushima (Ninety-Nine Islands) at Tenkaiho Observatory, Nagasaki Prefecture.*

A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

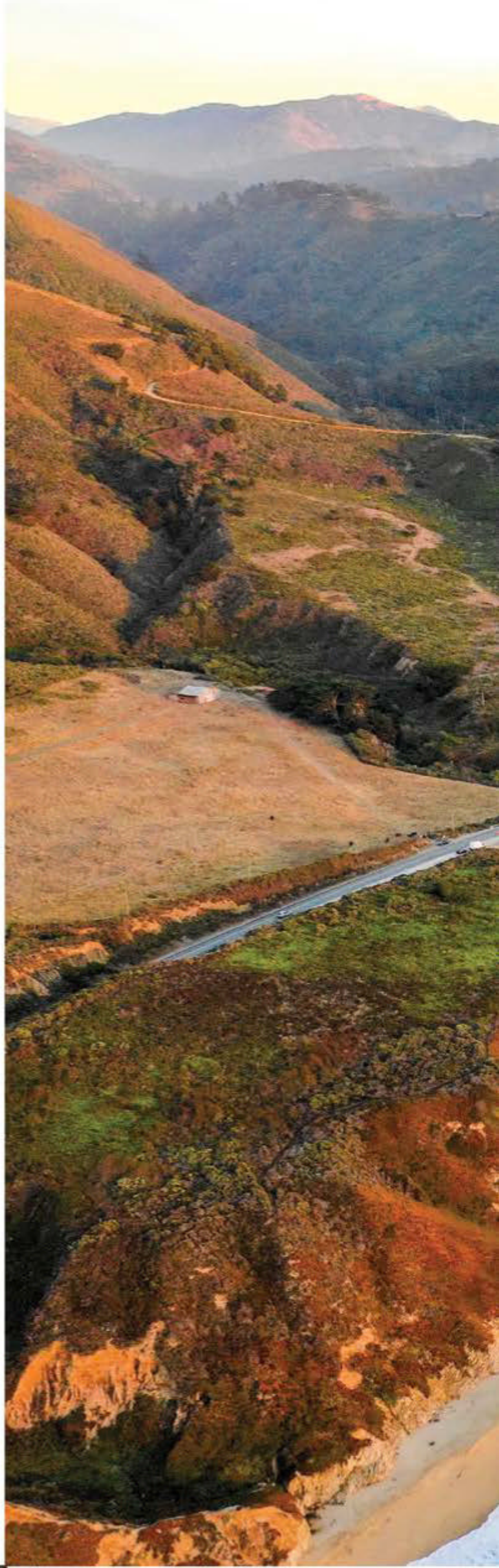
JAPAN AIRLINES (*jal.co.jp/au/en*) has daily flights from Sydney to Tokyo (Haneda); **JAL** and **ANA** (*ana.co.jp/en/au*) offer regular flights from Haneda to Fukuoka.

STAYING THERE

Choose a trio of design hotels to stay in style: the impactful circular lobby at **THE BASICS FUKUOKA** (*thebasics.jp/fukuoka*) is lined from floor to soaring ceiling with books big and small, all of which guests can browse and read; **REF KUMAMOTO BY VESSEL HOTELS** (*vessel-hotel.jp*) is another property that has a focus on books, with the bright and welcoming lobby dominated by a large communal reading table full of books, including plenty of manga. The two-storey loft rooms at **ARITA HUIS** (*aritahuis.com*) are stylishly simple in execution yet deliciously welcoming, echoing the exquisite Japanese minimalist lines of the lobby, with its eight-seat dinner counter overseen by chef Takashi Ikeda, gallery and shop.

EATING THERE

Japanese food is often described as a work of art, but at **NORITOU** the chef crafting the bouncy, nutty 100 per cent buckwheat soba noodles (most soba noodles these days are cut with other flours, so these are the gold standard) is the same artist whose ceramics are on display as you sit in this delightful gallery-cum-restaurant. The cold noodles come accompanied by soba-yu (soba water), which you dip the noodles in before slurping them from your chopsticks. See *noritou.com* or visit the **KILN ARITA TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE** near the station for details and directions.



CULT CLASSIC

IT'S AN ICONIC ROAD TRIP THROUGH A COASTAL LANDSCAPE THAT HAS LONG INSPIRED LITERARY GREATS AND HOLLYWOOD HEAVYWEIGHTS, BUT THE BEST PARTS OF CALIFORNIA'S HIGHWAY ONE ARE FOUND WHERE FEWER HAVE VENTURED.

Words **CRAIG TANSLEY**

FROM FAR LEFT: *An RV cruises along Highway One, which traces the Pacific Ocean; Big Sur is the most iconic section of this dramatic coastal drive.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *The rolling vineyards of renowned wine region Sonoma County; Cafe Aquatica is perched on the banks of the Russian River in the seaside town of Jenner, north of San Francisco; Highway One hugs the coast between rugged mountains and the sparkling Pacific Ocean.*

There's been something audaciously alluring about a road trip since before we even figured out how to lay bitumen on the ground. Jack Kerouac put it best in his 1957 celebration of escapism, *On the Road*: "I was surprised … by how easy the act of leaving was and how good it felt. The world was suddenly rich with possibility." And nowhere on Earth epitomises this feeling more than California's Highway One – a 1055-kilometre journey along almost the entire California coastline.

But we're not alone in wanting to ride this famous roadway, particularly during the northern summer. And so, done best, this iconic journey requires road-trippers to (occasionally, at least) leave the well-trodden path to find places less visited, but all the more special for it.

I'm back on Highway One after a two-year hiatus during which California was a place I visited only through a TV screen. With my top pulled down and my radio on (to borrow from Don Henley and his *Boys of Summer*), I opt to drive north-to-south from San Francisco to LA so that I'm always on the ocean side of the highway. Let's drive.

NORTH OF SAN FRANCISCO

Contrary to popular belief, Highway One doesn't end in San Francisco (SF) but instead continues for another 300 kilometres. I land in SF, pick up a convertible and point it north. There's no one in my rear-view mirror when I turn left towards the coast after the Golden Gate Bridge. Instead, there are lagoons by the roadside, tiny fishing villages and forests of gigantic redwoods. I pass towns such as Bolinas, where locals – keen to keep it off the tourist trail – steal the sign showing where to turn just as soon as anyone can put it up. Just north, Alfred Hitchcock used the beachside town of Bodega Bay as the setting of his 1963 classic *The Birds*, but it's the tiny hamlet of Jenner that wows me. Here, the Russian River empties into the Pacific beside long, deserted beaches of grey sand and driftwood. I settle in on a picnic table at Cafe Aquatica, watching seals frolic as a local plays *Hotel California*, and gorge myself on fresh crab rolls. The road twists and turns from here (they call this part Dramamine Drive after the motion sickness medicine for a reason), scaling coastal ranges and offering views from high up that make me want to pull over and applaud.

I pull into Mendocino: its main street of Victorian-era houses looks down on surfers in a pretty bay framed by mountains. Although Mendocino is the closest you'll get to a resort town in these parts, I only spot a handful of visitors strolling between art galleries; there are more artists per capita here than anywhere in California. It's a good place to settle in for a night, watching grey whales breach in the harbour as the sun sets into the ocean.

I keep tracking north, where sea lions bark from the water's edge. I find the only winery on Earth with a tasting room that doubles as a whale nursery. Pacific Star Winery is built on a bluff 100 metres above the Pacific Ocean. Owner Sally Ottoson points at two rocks offshore and tells me that's where whales bring their calves to keep them safe from great white sharks and orcas. I then backtrack south to one of California's best-kept secrets. Any road trip north of SF must head inland, for Anderson Valley is an American enigma. While it's highly regarded for award-winning pinot noirs, it receives fewer visitors than almost any other Californian wine region. Here's countryside once

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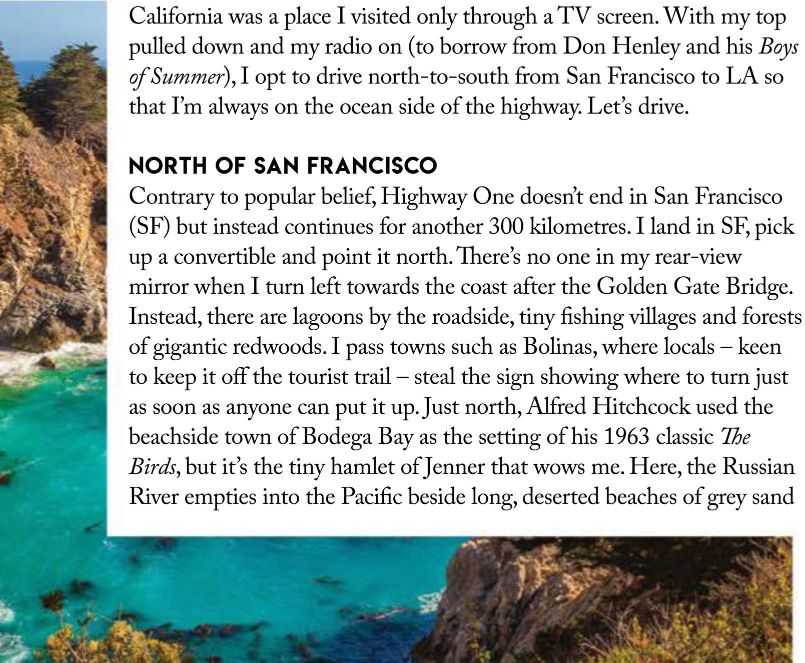
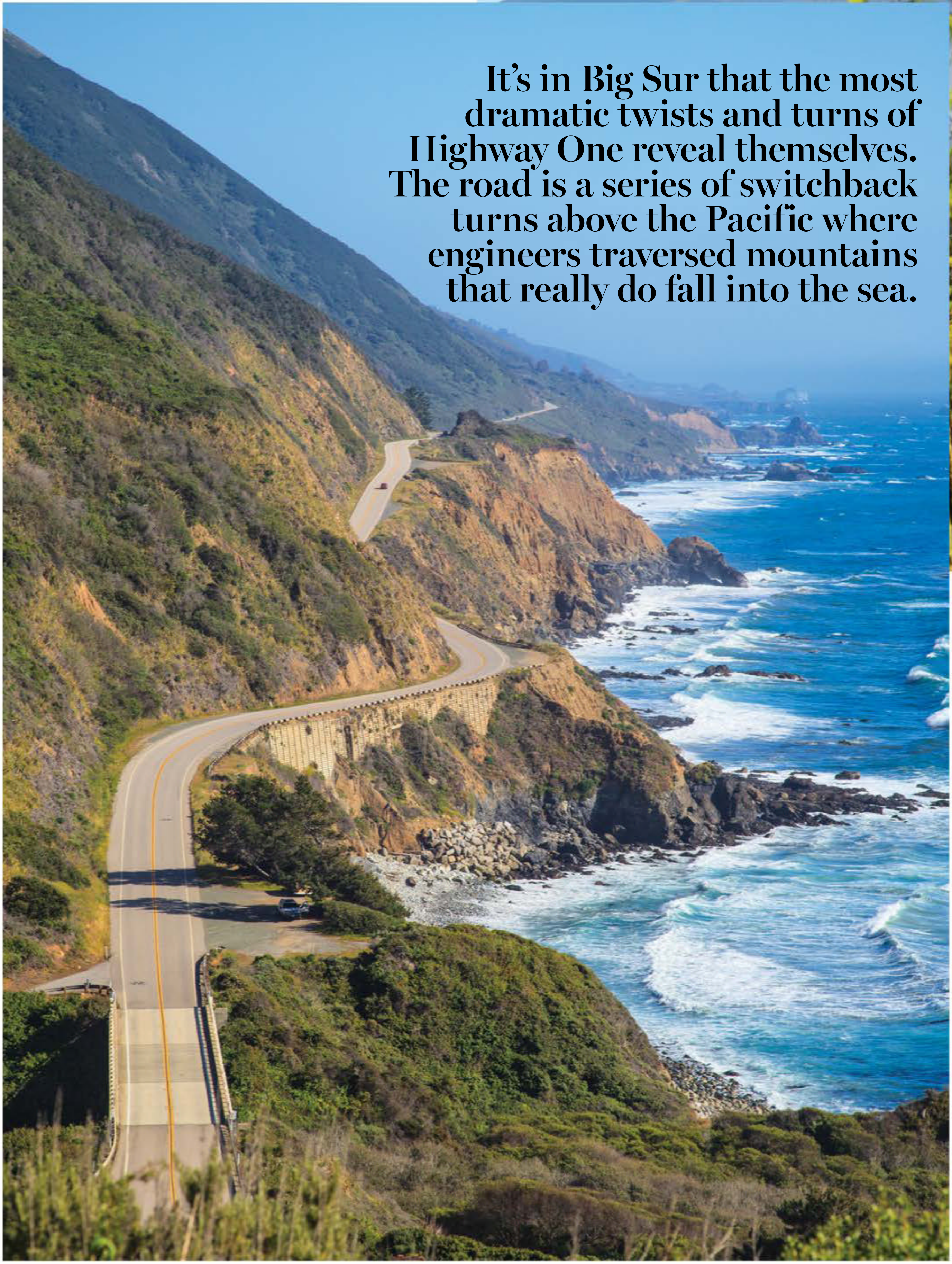
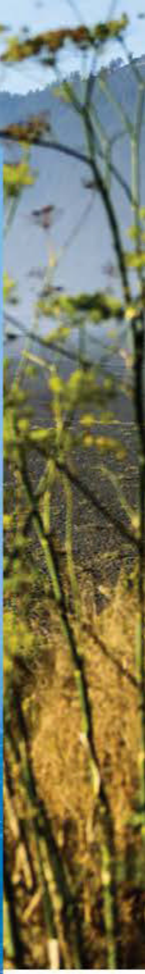




It's in Big Sur that the most dramatic twists and turns of Highway One reveal themselves. The road is a series of switchback turns above the Pacific where engineers traversed mountains that really do fall into the sea.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *The Sea Ranch Lodge menus feature locally sourced ingredients; Its earthy design complements the panoramic sea vistas; The lodge has a homely but sophisticated feeling; A wildly beautiful locale on the craggy Cali coast; Simple but cosy interiors.*

Conscious Traveller

SEE HOW LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN AT THE SEA RANCH

Take a two-hour walking tour with a local around the world's first environmental residential village, three hours' drive north of San Francisco. In 1964, a property developer entrusted America's greatest young designer minds to invent a place where humans could live totally in harmony with nature. They transformed a 2100-hectare sheep ranch into the SEA RANCH – the architectural monument of the 1960s. Now a community of 1300 stretching 16 kilometres along Highway One and the ocean, it's a unique chance to look inside a 60-year-old environmental protection concept. *unbeatenpathtours.com /thesearanch*

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: *Get cosy around the firepit at AutoCamp in Guerneville on the Russian River; Cascading 24 metres into the sea, McWay Falls at Big Sur is a spectacular sight; Wander the charming village streets of Carmel-By-The-Sea, also known for its white-sand beach.*

so removed that a language, Boontling, was created by locals. The frattey (wine) is served up in more than 60 wineries, among forests and natural hot springs where Mark Twain bathed.

Then I drive south into Sonoma. Here, some 425 wineries spread among 400,000 hectares are nothing like the better-known and more commercial kind that you'll pay an average of $40 tasting fee to sample next door in Napa. I drive west along mountain roads beside the Russian River and find towns just sniffing gentrification, empty of tourists. I stay the night in a luxury Airstream in Guerneville's AutoCamp Russian River, cradled within a cluster of redwoods, toasting s'mores under a starry Californian sky.

SOUTH TO SAN LUIS OBISPO

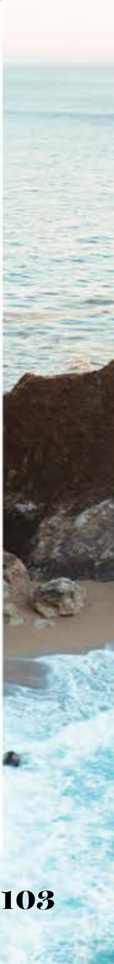
Just south of SF, I turn off right towards the coast and cruise narrow roads alongside strawberry farms, empty bays and calico-coloured pastures. You can choose to stay longer in Santa Cruz, soaking up its retro-surfie scene where longboarders battle waves that break beneath coastal cliffs, but it gets mighty busy when the sun's shining. Carmel-By-The-Sea, another hour south, is well worth a long pause. I forgo perusing its high-end boutiques for a walk along its dreamy foreshore and take a slow drive past its quirky beachside houses.

Big Sur, 40 minutes south, is an American icon that has captivated some of America's greatest minds including Henry Miller and Ernest Hemingway, who both moved here for a time to immortalise it in print. I stop for a bite at Nepenthe, built among trees in the foothills above the ocean. This knock-about restaurant/bar is a Hollywood institution. Not that you'd know it – even big-name stars can't book a table. The setting is always the star, never the clientele. Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth owned the property in the 1940s, and every star since then has had a margarita and stared out over that sea. Accommodation is tight in Big Sur, so book well in advance or keep driving south.

Here, the most dramatic twists and turns of Highway One reveal themselves. The road is a series of switchback turns above the Pacific where engineers traversed mountains that really do fall into the sea. There's not much here but elephant seals lolling on beaches by the roadway, and Hearst Castle, an estate created by publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst, which took 28 years to build and once hosted the likes of Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo and Winston Churchill. But I'm advised to turn off into San Luis Obispo (SLO), a town so quintessential that I'm told it's the one we actually all come to see on Highway One – but just didn't know it.

I fall in love immediately, cruising Downtown with the sun on my face, down bougainvillea and palm-lined boulevards, between Spanish Colonial-style buildings. SLO looks like a smaller version of Santa Barbara and I'm charged by its vibe. Everything's al fresco: bars, restaurants, cafes. Locals live their lives on its pretty streets. I'm staying in a new hotel, Hotel Cerro, which has a rooftop pool bar that takes me back to the week I spent in West Hollywood. Plus, there's a distillery in reception. How hipster.

I'm at the edge of two of California's most underrated wine regions, San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles, which are easily accessible on wine tours. And while SLO isn't on the coast, it's only 15 minutes from California's best coastal park, Montaña de Oro State Park. I walk along high cliffs beside the sea with no one around, watching harbour seals, whales and sea otters below. There are tiny surfing and fishing towns dotted around, but when California's coastal fog gathers over the beaches, I drive back to SLO for my time in the sun. >>



PHOTOGRAPHY THE SEA RANCH LODGE (THE SEA RANCH); AUBRIE PICK (AUTOCAMP FIREPIT)

ONWARD TO MONTECITO AND OJAI

It's 90 minutes to Santa Barbara from SLO, a journey that takes me across two fault lines and through the setting for Hollywood's best-ever movie about wine. *Sideways* was filmed in Santa Ynez Valley, 40 minutes north of Santa Barbara. Nominated for five Oscars, it's considered one of *the* films of the 2000s, but everyone thought it was filmed in Napa. So the region remains a mystery; I drive to wineries located among vast canyons and valleys where owners still pour the wines themselves. Try finding a prettier wine village anywhere on Earth than Los Olivos, with its dreamy brick bars and restaurants covered in creeping vines.

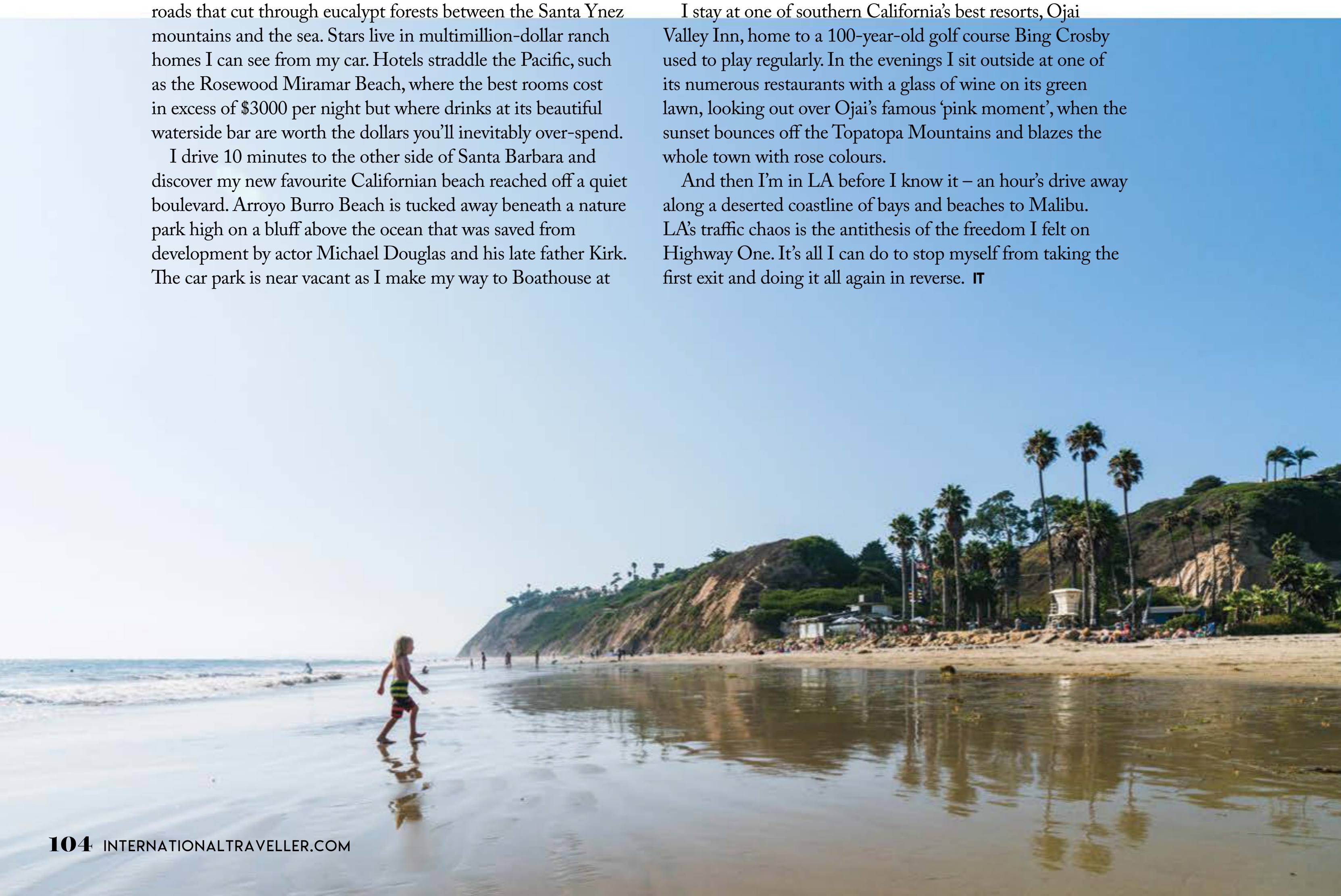
Santa Barbara's hardly a secret, but there are enigmas around its periphery. I make the 10-minute drive east of town to Highway One's 'other' Malibu. Montecito is home to stars from Oprah to Jennifer Aniston to Prince Harry, yet there's no celeb-spotting tours or paparazzi (the mountain lions might eat them). The town is a sleepy affair a few hundred metres from the ocean, full of chic boutiques and cafes covered in succulents where the likes of Gwyneth Paltrow shop and sip matcha lattes. There's an Upper and Lower Village, separated by deserted, winding roads that cut through eucalypt forests between the Santa Ynez mountains and the sea. Stars live in multimillion-dollar ranch homes I can see from my car. Hotels straddle the Pacific, such as the Rosewood Miramar Beach, where the best rooms cost in excess of $3000 per night but where drinks at its beautiful waterside bar are worth the dollars you'll inevitably over-spend.

I drive 10 minutes to the other side of Santa Barbara and discover my new favourite Californian beach reached off a quiet boulevard. Arroyo Burro Beach is tucked away beneath a nature park high on a bluff above the ocean that was saved from development by actor Michael Douglas and his late father Kirk. The car park is near vacant as I make my way to Boathouse at Hendry's Beach, a cafe built on the sand where locals sit eating crab cakes for breakfast as Santa Barbarians run their dogs.

And there are still more secrets just off Highway One. Forty-five minutes east, I turn off for Ojai, a tip from an LA-based acquaintance who's been visiting for 35 years. Barely an hour's drive from the outskirts of LA, how this Zen paradise tucked in a valley beneath the Topatopa Mountains has escaped our national attention is anyone's guess. Nicknamed Shangri La for its ethereal qualities, outsiders have been coming to town since 1874 to take water from hot springs said to hold a vortex of spiritual energy gifted by the area's Traditional Owners, the Chumash Indians. Life here is centred around a good-looking village of art galleries, yoga studios and aromatherapy and crystal stores built into a streetscape of Spanish Mission-style stucco walls and red clay-tiled roofs. There are cafes, restaurants and breweries here I could become a regular at, and while it's a celeb hideout these days, there's a simplicity to life here you feel on your first visit. I hire a bike and ride along kilometres of bike trails to wineries, olive plantations and to the foothills of the mountains.

I stay at one of southern California's best resorts, Ojai Valley Inn, home to a 100-year-old golf course Bing Crosby used to play regularly. In the evenings I sit outside at one of its numerous restaurants with a glass of wine on its green lawn, looking out over Ojai's famous 'pink moment', when the sunset bounces off the Topatopa Mountains and blazes the whole town with rose colours.

And then I'm in LA before I know it – an hour's drive away along a deserted coastline of bays and beaches to Malibu. LA's traffic chaos is the antithesis of the freedom I felt on Highway One. It's all I can do to stop myself from taking the first exit and doing it all again in reverse. **IT**



A Traveller's Checklist

GETTING THERE

QANTAS (*qantas.com.au*) and **UNITED** (*united.com*) fly to San Francisco daily; or fly to LA with Qantas or **DELTA AIR LINES** (*delta.com*). All major car rental companies operate out of San Francisco and LA international airports.

STAYING THERE

Sleep beside sea cliffs outside Mendocino (*heritagehouseresort.com*); stay in a luxury Airstream in Guerneville (*autocamp.com/russian-river*); soak up chilled central Californian vibes in SLO at **HOTEL CERRO** (*hotelcerro.com*); and sample one of California's greatest luxury resorts (*ojaivalleyinn.com*).

EATING THERE

Sample cocktails and the best farm-to-table cuisine at **BOON EAT + DRINK** (*eatatboon.com*); eat where every movie icon has eaten before you in Big Sur at **NEPENTHE** (*nepenthe.com*); and dine with stunning views of Ojai's pink moment at **OJAI VALLEY INN** (*ojaivalleyinn.com*).

PLAYING THERE

Take a private wine tour and tasting at one of SLO's best wineries, **ONX WINES** (*onxwine.com*), and take a bike or hike tour of Ojai with **TRAILS BY POTTER** (*hikingojai.com*). See *visitcalifornia.com* for more information.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Take a tour of ONX Wines in Paso Robles; Head south along Highway One to drive on the ocean side for epic views; Relax outdoors at AutoCamp in Guerneville; San Luis Obispo's streets are a unique mix of Spanish Revival and Wild West.* **OPPOSITE:** *Arroyo Burro Beach in Santa Barbara, often called Hendry's Beach by locals.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BLAKE BRONSTAD (ARROYO BURRO BEACH); TINA SWAIN PHOTOGRAPHY (AUTOCAMP); ACACIA PRODUCTIONS (ONX WINES)

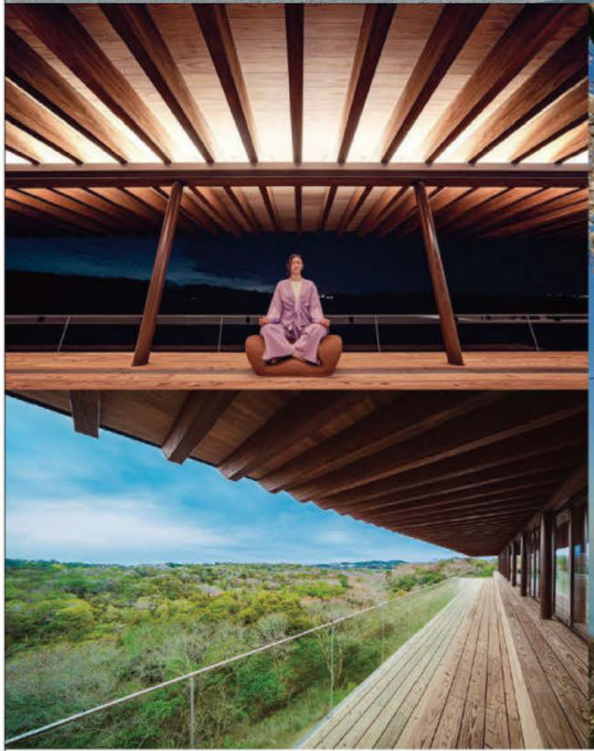
Your New ESCAPE Destination

AUTHENTIC JAPAN: SETOUCHI

Learn why these hundreds of islands rising majestically from calmly flowing waters hold such a special place in the Japanese psyche. Go deep and you will see not just natural beauty, but the essence of what it means to be truly alive. Discovery and delights, adventure and indulgence, a world of experience awaits you in Setouchi, where the largest inland sea lies in Western Japan.

Zenbo Seinei (Awaji island, Hyogo Pref.) The architect : Shigeru Ban(Pritzker Prize-winning)

Aiming to provide visitors in search of a lifestyle that values physical and mental well-being with a well-rounded Zen experience, Zenbo Seinei accommodates meditation, healthy food, and profound rest all under one roof, thoughtfully blending mindfulness and Zen philosophy to cultivate contentment.



The Seto Inland Sea lies at the very core of the rich culture and dynamism that is today's Japan. It is a 450-kilometer- long liquid jewel flowing through the heart of the country, crowned in green by more than 700 islands rising serenely from the placid water.

Mt.Shiude , Kagawa pref,

SETOUCHI
REFLECTION TRIP

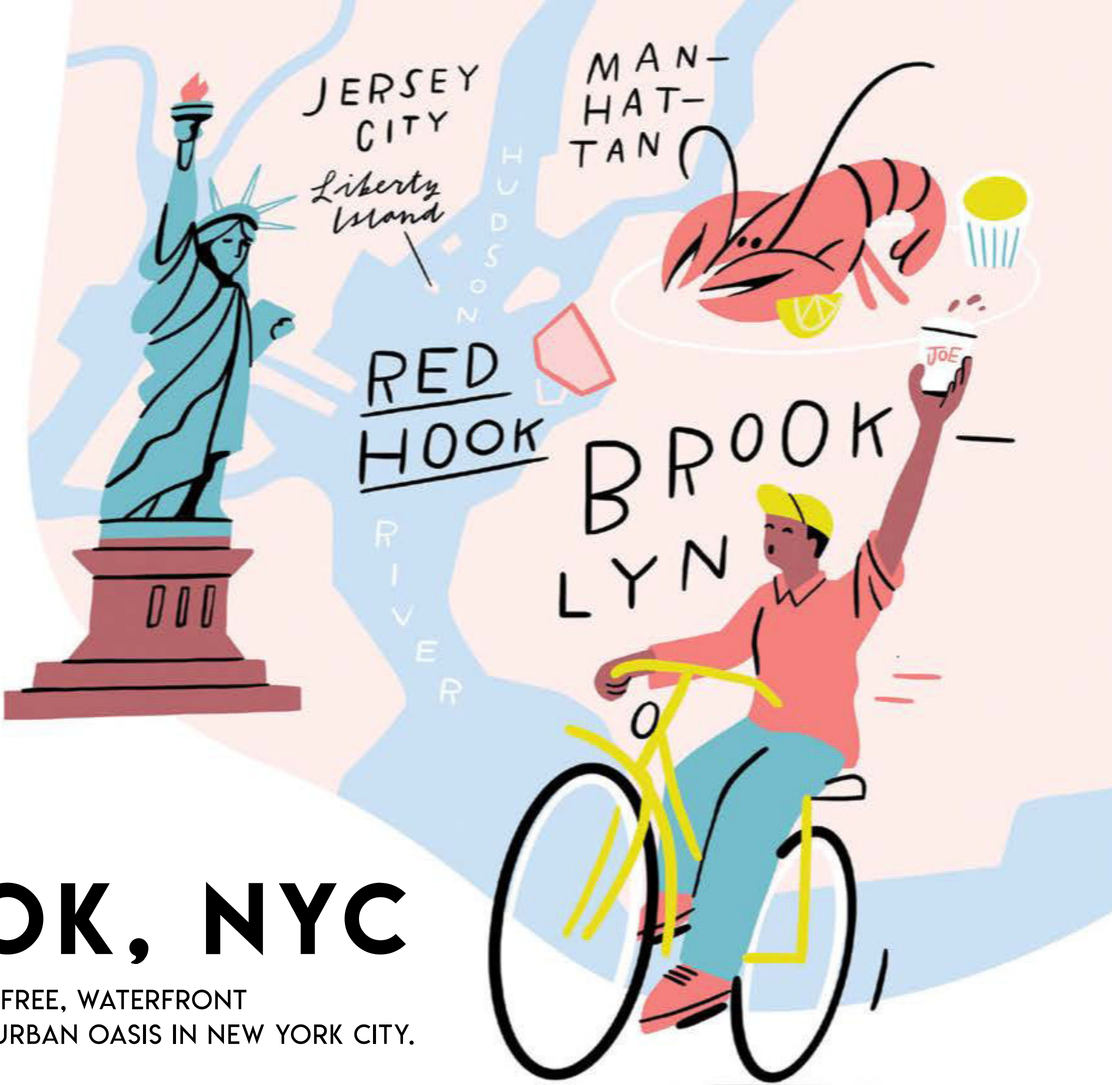
Find out more

© 2023 SETOUCHI Tourism Authority

PASSPORT

ON THE HOOK

The waterfront neighbourhood of Red Hook has its own distinct personality. The Brooklyn borough is all cobbled streets, red-brick warehouses, lobster shacks, cool bars and vintage cars. Add a joyful jaunt around its backstreets to your New York City itinerary. Turn the page for more.



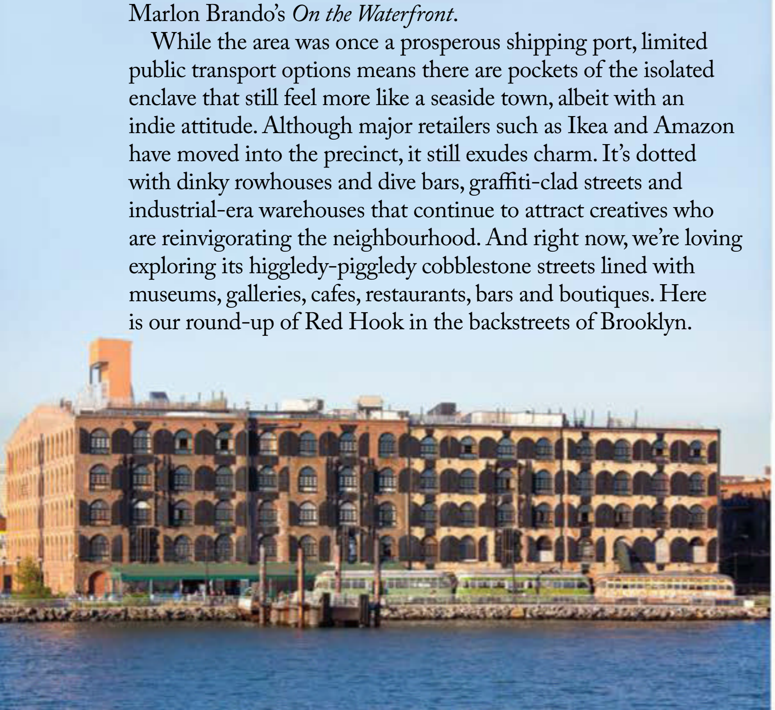
Backstreets

RED HOOK, NYC

HERE'S THE HOOK: THIS SUBWAY-FREE, WATERFRONT NEIGHBOURHOOD IS AN INNER-URBAN OASIS IN NEW YORK CITY.

It's hard to believe that a neighbourhood like Red Hook exists in a city like New York, which has a population of 8.5 million and is the largest urban area in the US. Red Hook is compact. It's walkable. It has a community feel. It also has green space, a community garden and killer waterfront views towards the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan skyline, clearly visible in the distance against a blue-grey backdrop of sky. Called Ihepetonga by the Indigenous Lenape and Roode Hoek (red point) by the Dutch after the red clay found on the peninsula, Red Hook is one of the first areas in Brooklyn to be settled. It was also the inspiration for Marlon Brando's *On the Waterfront*.

While the area was once a prosperous shipping port, limited public transport options means there are pockets of the isolated enclave that still feel more like a seaside town, albeit with an indie attitude. Although major retailers such as Ikea and Amazon have moved into the precinct, it still exudes charm. It's dotted with dinky rowhouses and dive bars, graffiti-clad streets and industrial-era warehouses that continue to attract creatives who are reinvigorating the neighbourhood. And right now, we're loving exploring its higgledy-piggledy cobblestone streets lined with museums, galleries, cafes, restaurants, bars and boutiques. Here is our round-up of Red Hook in the backstreets of Brooklyn.



EAT + DRINK

A NOBLE PURSUIT

NOBLETREE COFFEE is a vertically integrated coffee company in Red Hook with some of the best seats in the house for viewing the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. The small-batch roastery is housed in a charming mid-19th century industrial brick building and hosts coffee courses for budding baristas. *nobletreecoffee.com*

A FORK IN THE ROAD

The **GOOD FORK PUB** has long had a cult following for its Korean-style steak and eggs, fried wontons and bar snacks designed to complement beer, wine and cocktails. The Red Hook institution was recently reimagined as a more casual public house and remains a hip, happening and community-focused spot to hunker down. *goodfork.com*

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Head to the **RED HOOK FOOD VENDORS MARKETPLACE** to slurp down street-style tacos, huaraches and quesadillas that are considered some of the most authentic in New York City. The food trucks converge in Red Hook Park between April and October. *instagram.com/redhookfoodvendors*

CLAW AND ORDER

There's no better place to indulge your love of crustaceans than at the landmark **LOBSTER POUND** (*redhooklobster.com*). Have a stack of serviettes ready for the New England Seafood Boil, or keep it low-key with the signature lobster rolls around rustic tables in the industrial-chic space. Seafood shack **BROOKLYN CRAB** (*brooklyncrab.com*) should also be on your radar.

WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI **ILLUSTRATION** MIKE ROSSI **PHOTOGRAPHY** TIMOTHY FADEK (SUSAN POVICH)

OK LOBSTER POUND
CARRY OUT 284

> “I love the smell of the sea air and the saltiness of the residents. Red Hook is a part of NYC where neighbours know and help out each other. The view of the Statue of Liberty can’t be beat.”
>
> *— Susan Povich, co-founder, Red Hook Lobster Pound*

DAWN TO DUSK

A day out in Red Hook

MORNING...
Red Hook has one of the first large-scale public housing developments of its kind, the RED HOOK HOUSES. You can sign up to volunteer at RED HOOK FARMS, a youth-centred urban agriculture and food justice program designed to support the residents of the precinct. *rhicenter.org*

AFTERNOON...
Fossick through the sale bins at RECORD SHOP to find new records to give a spin. The aptly named Record Shop has a solid range of jazz, rock, hip-hop, blues and gospel titles. *360 Van Brunt St, Red Hook*

EVENING...
SUNNY’S has been in the same family since 1890, during which time it’s morphed from restaurant to longshoreman’s bar to its current iteration as a waterfront saloon. Expect bluegrass jams, local eccentrics and absolute bedlam to ensue. The glorious saloon bar was saved after Cyclone Sandy. We’ll join locals in toasting to that. *sunnysredhook.com*

SHOPPING THERE
You won’t need to worry about blowing out your baggage allowance when you visit hidden gem ERIE BASIN. But you may well blow the budget on bracelets, brooches, engagement rings or earrings. Owner Russell Whitmore has a keen eye for vintage pieces and has also launched a fine jewellery line called EB. *eriebasin.com*

STAYING THERE
The WYTHE HOTEL is one of the best places to stay near Red Hook. It’s housed in a converted 100-year-old factory on the Brooklyn waterfront. The building was originally designed to manufacture barrels for sugar refiners and has become one of the best boutique places to stay in the Big Apple. *wythehotel.com*

MORE WAYS TO EXPLORE

BE SPIRITED AWAY
VAN BRUNT STILLHOUSE is a ‘farm distillery’ located in the heart of Red Hook. It sources organically grown corn, wheat and rye from a single farm in nearby Ithaca for its range of small-batch whiskeys and bourbon. Take a tour of the distillery and book in for a tasting. *vanbruntstillhouse.com*

WHAT’S THE HOOK?
Residents of Red Hook pay homage to the precinct by hanging red hooks around their homes and businesses. Walk around the neighbourhood to try and spot the red hooks, which are in keeping with the neighbourhood’s nautical theme. Keep your eyes peeled at the Four Corners intersection for a new giant red hook sculpted by Dominican-American artist Wilfredo Morel who turns scrap metal into art. *nycgo.com*

PERFORMANCE REVIEW
Steal a few moments of reprieve from the hurly burly of the Big Apple to visit PIONEER WORKS, which bills itself as a centre for research and experimentation in contemporary culture. This centre for performance art has an exciting program of concerts and performances in a space where alternative ways of thinking are celebrated. *pioneerworks.org*

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MARIA PASQUALE

The Rome-based Melburnian and author of I Heart Rome, How to be Italian *and new book* The Eternal City *on the joy of hotel stays, Sicilian street food and the buzz of NYC.*

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF TRAVELLING? I was six years old and it was a trip to Abruzzo (1) in Italy to meet my paternal grandparents who never emigrated to Australia. I was mesmerised by the sights, sounds and flavours and the distinct contrast to life in Melbourne.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT TRAVEL? The thrill of discovering new places, cultures and ways of life. Travel has played a part in my own growth and perspective on life. It is a privilege that I won't ever take for granted.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING NEXT? London. I'm headed over for a journalists' conference but I couldn't resist extending the trip for a weekend of cocktails, high tea and a West End show with friends.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CITY IN THE WORLD? Besides Rome and Melbourne: New York City (2). We have little sleep in common; a thirst for life, art, culture, style, drive, all of it.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE FOOD DESTINATION? Sicily (3, 4) is a treasure trove for food lovers. I can't get enough of the spices, the fried street food, the cannoli, everything!

WHAT'S ALWAYS IN YOUR CARRY-ON? Phone charger and a scarf (5).

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO, READING OR WATCHING ON THE ROAD? I'm watching the second season of *The White Lotus*. Music-wise, my Italy playlist is a whole bunch of 1950s and '60s nostalgic Italian tunes from iconic artists such as Mina, Ornella Vanoni and Domenico Modugno.

HOMESTAY (AIRBNB), HOTEL OR HOSTEL – WHICH DO YOU PREFER? Checking into a hotel is one of my favourite things in the world! I adore Forestis in the Dolomites; Grand Hotel Tremezzo at Lake Como; Borgo Santandrea on the Amalfi Coast; Villa Igiea in Palermo; and Mezzatorre Resort and Spa and Botania Relais and Spa, both in Ischia. I could go on!

WHAT DO YOU DO TO TRAVEL MORE CONSCIOUSLY? I make a conscious effort to buy locally made products in each destination.

WHAT'S YOUR ABSOLUTE DREAM LOCATION? The Maldives (6). I've spent years daydreaming about those spectacular overwater bungalows.

WHAT'S THE BEST SOUVENIR YOU'VE BROUGHT HOME? I've collected snow globes (7) since I was a kid and have more than a hundred. The coolest one, from Phoenix, Arizona, has sand instead of water.

WHAT MADE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH ROME? The unique way in which the past, present and future coexist here. The history, the grandeur of her monuments, the resplendent piazzas and artwork, the carbonara! It provokes thought, frustrates, enthrals and envelops you in beauty, all at the same time.

IS THERE A DESTINATION IN ITALY THAT DESERVES MORE ATTENTION? Milan and Turin. You used to come to Milan for business but now you stay to play. It's an eclectic, dynamic and forward-looking city with culture and arts, fashion and design, and an exciting culinary scene. And Turin, with its coffee houses and galleries, is truly one of the most elegant cities in Italy. **IT**

The Eternal City *is available now. maria-pasquale.com*

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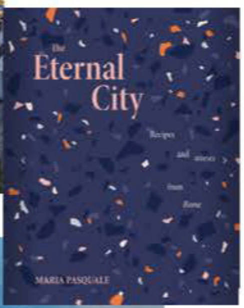

The Eternal City

Recipes and stories from Rome

MARIA PASQUALE

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ISOLA DI ISCHIA

INTERVIEW EDWINA HART **PHOTOGRAPHY** MARIMEKKO 2019 (LAUHTUA SAVANNI SCARF); ANDREA DI LORENZO (MARIA PASQUALE PORTRAIT)

In partnership with Hotel Hassler Roma

THIS LUXURY HOTEL HAS THE BEST VIEW IN ROME

The Eternal City's Hotel Hassler isn't just a place to stay – it's an experience in itself.

Located at the top of the Spanish Steps, moments from the Villa Borghese gardens and minutes from the luxury boutiques of Via Condotti, Hotel Hassler has an enviable position at the heart of one of Rome's most popular tourist attractions.

Step inside the discreet entrance, however, and you'll discover a haven of exclusivity for travellers: a family-owned business that exemplifies the best of Italian hospitality, a Michelin-starred kitchen and a view that belongs in a Hollywood fairy tale.

STEEPED IN HISTORY

The hotel was opened in 1893 and has been owned and operated by six generations of the same hotelier family since 1921.

After being demolished and rebuilt in the 1930s, the hotel was the headquarters of the US Air Force during the Second World War. It re-opened to guests in 1947 and then became the preferred refuge of nobility, royalty and diplomats. The owners, Roberto and Veruschka Wirth, attribute its ongoing popularity to the high quality of service their guests experience.

"While we receive many compliments for the location and the rooms, what our guests most frequently appreciate is our staff," they say. "At the end of the day, no matter how perfect a product can be, it's the staff that are the heart and soul of a place."

LUXURIOUS ROOMS

The hotel boasts 87 individually decorated five-star rooms and suites, each one featuring a king bed, marble bath, fabrics chosen by the Wirth matriarch and stunning views of the city beyond.

SEE ROME FROM THE ROOFTOP

Guests have private access to the hotel's seventh-floor terrace, which offers one of the most prized views of Rome. At dusk, take a seat and you'll have the twin spires of the Trinità dei Monti church to your right, the chatter of the crowd on the Spanish Steps below and the sweeping cityscape of Rome before you as the sun goes down.

A MICHELIN-STARRED TASTE OF ITALY

In 1956, the Hassler was the first hotel in Rome to establish a rooftop restaurant. Today the sixth floor is home to chef Andrea Antonini's Michelin-starred restaurant, Imàgo. Downstairs, sip a Veruschka, the hotel's signature cocktail, in the historic Hassler Bar or feast on traditional delicacies at the in-house restaurant, Salone Eva.

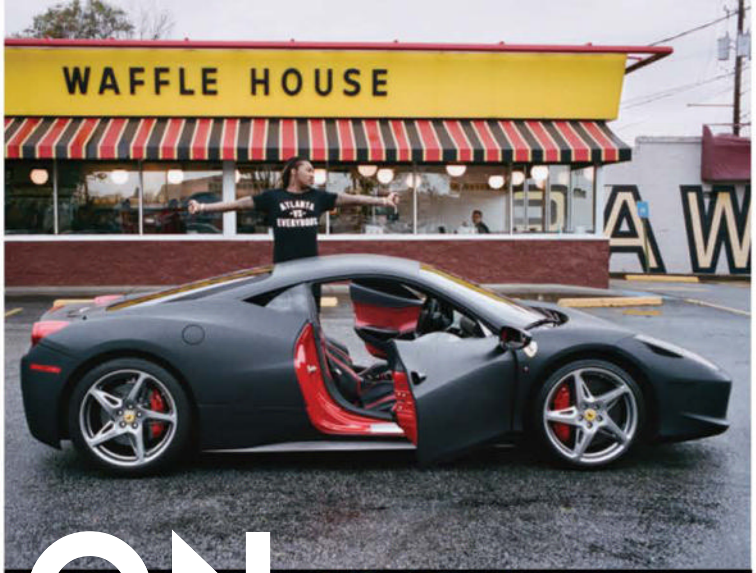
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Enjoy classical art throughout the hotel; Step out onto the Spanish Steps; Relax in a luxurious room or suite; The sweeping rooftop views.*

THINKING AHEAD

While the hotel exemplifies traditional hospitality, it's also future-focused. The hotel has undertaken steps to reduce its carbon footprint, including using an electronic vehicle as a complimentary courtesy shuttle for guests.

For more information and to book your stay, visit hotelhasslerroma.com

WORDS SHANEY HUDSON **PHOTOGRAPHY** HOTEL HASSLER

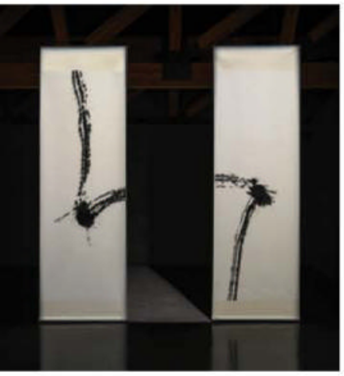


Until 21 May
HIP-HOP: CONSCIOUS, UNCONSCIOUS
New York, USA

THE ORIGIN OF HIP-HOP HAS BEEN TRACED TO A 1973 HOUSE PARTY IN THE BRONX, WHEN DJ KOOL HERC DEVELOPED THE 'BREAK' USING TWO TURNTABLES. NOW, 50 YEARS LATER, A PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AT FOTOGRAFISKA NYC TRACES THE VIBRANT HISTORY OF THE GENRE WITH REFERENCE TO HIP-HOP MEGASTARS, TRAILBLAZING WOMEN AND HIP-HOP CULTURE FROM COAST TO COAST. FOTOGRAFISKA.COM/NYC

WHAT'S ON

GET CULTURED WITH THIS ECLECTIC CROSS-SECTION OF ARTS EVENTS HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD.



Until 24 April
ERA OF PRINCIPLE AND NO PRINCIPLE INTERWOVEN – CALLIGRAPHY AS A VISUAL FORM
Taoyuan, Taiwan

ASIAN CALLIGRAPHY IS AN ANCIENT ART FORM – A PURE EXPRESSION OF ENERGY AND MOTION. THIS EXHIBITION AT THE TAOYUAN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (TMOFA) BRINGS THE ARTISTIC QUALITY OF CALLIGRAPHY FRONT AND CENTRE, WITH A DIVERSE DISPLAY OF CONTEMPORARY WORKS FROM ACROSS ASIA AND BEYOND. TMOFA.TYCG.GOV.TW/EN

1 April – 1 February 2024
TARTAN
Dundee, Scotland

There are few nations as synonymous with a pattern as Scotland is with tartan. This April, the *Tartan* exhibition at V&A Dundee collates items from around the world to piece together the influence of the iconic cloth in fashion, art, architecture and beyond. From historic highlandwear to haute couture, clansmen to punk rockers, the exhibition weaves a tapestry of the fascinating cultural history of the fabric. *vam.ac.uk*

NOT TO MENTION…

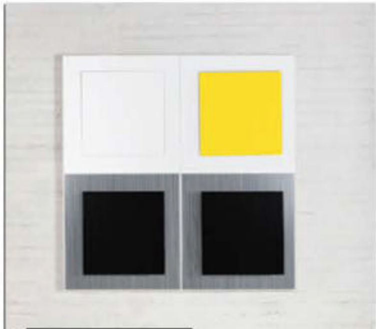
Until 7 May
WOMEN ARTISTS AND GLOBAL ABSTRACTION: ACTION, GESTURE, PAINT
Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
whitechapelgallery.org

28 April – 7 May
NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL
New Orleans, USA
nojazzfest.com

19–21 May
LOTUS LANTERN FESTIVAL
South Korea
llf.or.kr/eng

14–23 April
COACHELLA
Indio, California, USA
coachella.com

27–30 April
OTTAWA POUTINEFEST
Ottawa, Canada
ottawapoutinefest.ca



UNTIL 15 APRIL
JESÚS RAFAEL SOTO, THE INSTABILITY OF THE REAL
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

THE LATE VENEZUELAN ARTIST JESÚS RAFAEL SOTO WAS A PIONEER OF OPTICAL AND KINETIC ART, PLAYING WITH FORM TO BRING MOVEMENT AND ILLUSION INTO HIS WORK. ON THE CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH, THIS SOLO EXHIBITION AT MEXICO CITY'S GALERIA RGR EXPLORES THE SURREAL WORLD OF SOTO, CELEBRATING THE DEMATERIALISATION OF FORM, DISSOLUTION OF THE REAL AND TRANSCENDENCE OF TRADITIONAL PARAMETERS IN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. *RGRART.COM*

ARTWORKS KAWAO TOMOKO, *CORRELATION 2022 -CROSS-*, 2022 (ERA OF PRINCIPLE); THEO WENNER, *FUTURE, ATLANTA*, 2016; CHARLIE AHEARN, *GRAND MASTER FLASH, DEBBIE HARRY, FAB 5 FREDDY AND CHRIS STEIN*, 1981; JESUS RAFAEL SOTO, *UNTITLED*, 1993, PAINTING ON WOOD AND METAL, (THE INSTABILITY OF THE REAL); CHEDDAR GORGEOUS, *CHEDDAR GORGEOUS IN A SUIT DESIGNED BY LIQUORICE BLACK*, 2017 (TARTAN); BONHAMS EDINBURGH, *18TH CENTURY CALEDONIAN SOCIETY COAT*

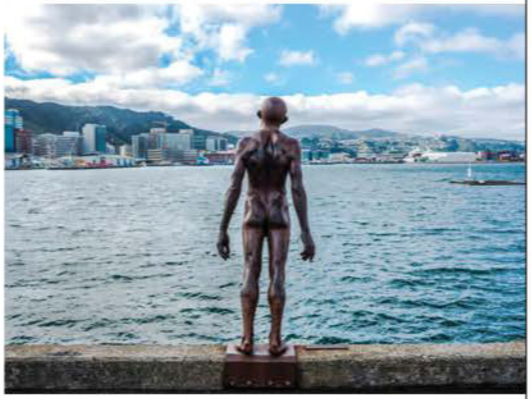
A day at the museum

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

TE PAPA LITERALLY TRANSLATES TO 'CONTAINER OF TREASURES'. INSIDE NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL MUSEUM, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'LL FIND.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Te Papa has been pulling together art and artefacts that encapsulate the heart of a nation since 1992. Te Papa spans six storeys, weaving together the nature, histories, identities and cultures of the land the museum stands on. Here, there's no trace of the pomp and propriety often associated with a national museum – Te Papa sets itself apart with displays that are interactive, creative and fun. From a vast collection of Māori artefacts to iconic works of contemporary art, the museum showcases the heart and soul of New Zealand/Aotearoa with personality and passion. *tepapa.govt.nz*



EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP

FIND MORE TREASURES AT TE PAPA'S GIFT SHOP, WHICH OFFERS A GRAND SELECTION OF TRADITIONAL MĀORI CRAFTS AND LOCAL ART. THINK WHALEBONE CARVINGS, *POUNAMU* (GREENSTONE) JEWELLERY, QUIRKY ARTISAN HOMEWARE AND COFFEE-TABLE BOOKS ON MĀORI ART AND CULTURE.

Waterfront walk

Te Papa backs onto Wellington's glorious harbour. Be sure to complete your visit with a stroll along the promenade, taking in the sculptures dotted along the water's edge by various local artists. A highlight is the Water Whirler, *designed from a 1960s sketch by renowned kinetic sculptor, Len Lye. The structure comes alive multiple times a day, using jet streams and motion to create mesmerising water patterns.*

TOP FIVE...

GALLIPOLI: THE SCALE OF OUR WAR

This exhibition brings the Gallipoli campaign to life by allowing visitors to journey alongside eight men who lived it, using world-class artistry, audio and human sculptures at 2.4 times the scale.

COLOSSAL SQUID

Te Papa stakes claim to the only colossal squid on display in the world. Visitors can encounter this incredibly rare creature of the sea, which weighs in at a whopping 500 kilograms.

KALEIDOSCOPE: ABSTRACT AOTEAROA

This exhibition showcases how shape and colour have influenced South Pacific artists – it's a refreshing look at abstract art outside the European framework that it's oft confined to.

MANA WHENUA

Meaning 'people of the land', this exhibition explores Māori culture and identity with reference to traditional crafts, historic treasures and contemporary artworks.

TE TAIAO/NATURE

New Zealand's nature draws visitors from all over the world. Get acquainted with it at this exhibition that alchemises science with Indigenous knowledge.

EXHIBITIONS ON NOW

Mataaho Collective: Te Puni Aroaro

Four *wāhine* (female) Māori artists collaborate on a series of installation works that explore the histories of water, light, *atua* (gods) and wāhine Māori.

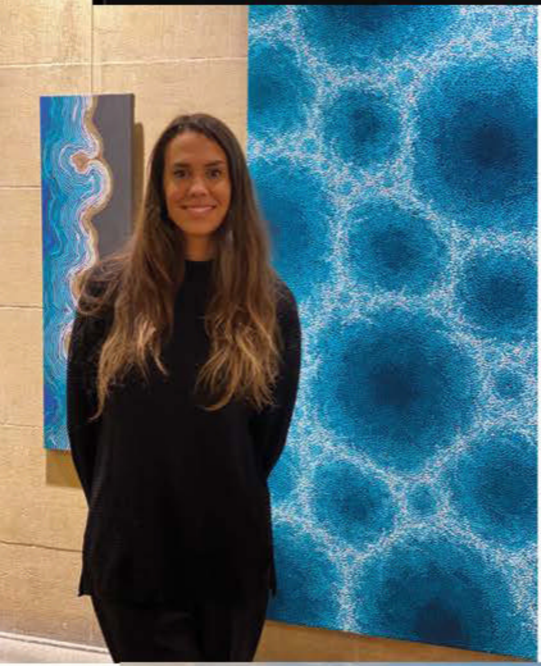
Dane Mitchell: Iris, Iris, Iris

Centred around the homonym 'iris', this exhibition poetically intertwines the iconography of iris flowers and eyes through an evocative display of perfumes, visuals and textures.

WORDS ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD **PHOTOGRAPHY** GERHARD ZWERGER-SCHONER (TE PAPA EXTERIOR), STEPHEN FLEMING (*SOLACE OF THE WIND* SCULPTURE)

FLY THE FLAG

JASMINE COE OF COE GALLERY IN BRISTOL ON RECONNECTING WITH ROOTS AND UPLIFTING INDIGENOUS VOICES IN THE UK.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Activist Paul Coe in 1970; Coe Gallery is the UK's first Aboriginal-owned art gallery; The Aboriginal flag flies above Bristol City Hall; Bristol has a thriving arts community; Curator Jasmine Coe's art is inspired by her connection to her Wiradjuri heritage.*

Coe Gallery in Bristol is the UK's very first Aboriginal-owned art gallery, dedicated to spotlighting First Nations artists across the pond. "Coe Gallery takes its name from my father Paul Coe," says artist, curator and gallery founder Jasmine Coe. "My father is an Aboriginal activist of the Wiradjuri Nation. The gallery is inspired by his lifetime of activism for the equality and self-determination of Aboriginal people".

In 1976, Paul Coe travelled to the UK to stake a 'claim' to England as Aboriginal land, to protest and satirise the British assertion of 'Terra Nullius' over Australia. Today, Coe Gallery continues this legacy of sparking international dialogue by highlighting the colonial threads that have interwoven the nations' pasts.

"We believe because of this shared history, it is particularly important [to] hold space here for Aboriginal people and culture and [convey] their stories, voices and experiences. Art is the perfect place to hold these conversations."

As one of the UK's most progressive cities, Bristol is receptive to having this conversation. For the duration of Coe Gallery's first exhibition, Bristol City Hall flew the Aboriginal flag on College Green for the first time ever – a small but significant symbol of Indigenous acknowledgement.

"The Black Lives Matter movement in Bristol opened up conversations of change and equality," says Jasmine. "Because of this, I have felt there is space for the Australian Aboriginal experience to be heard ... it is the perfect place to facilitate meaningful cultural exchange."

Jasmine's paintings are displayed alongside several other Indigenous artists at Coe Gallery. Growing up in the UK, art was a medium for Jasmine to explore heritage and identity. Visits to Wiradjuri Country later became a vast creative resource: "My work is a celebration of the natural world and the values that I have learnt from connecting to my Wiradjuri heritage. Connecting to the land and waters is a continuous source of inspiration." *coegallery.com* **IT**

WORDS ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD **PHOTOGRAPHY** STATE LIBRARY OF NSW/SEARCH FOUNDATION (PAUL COE)

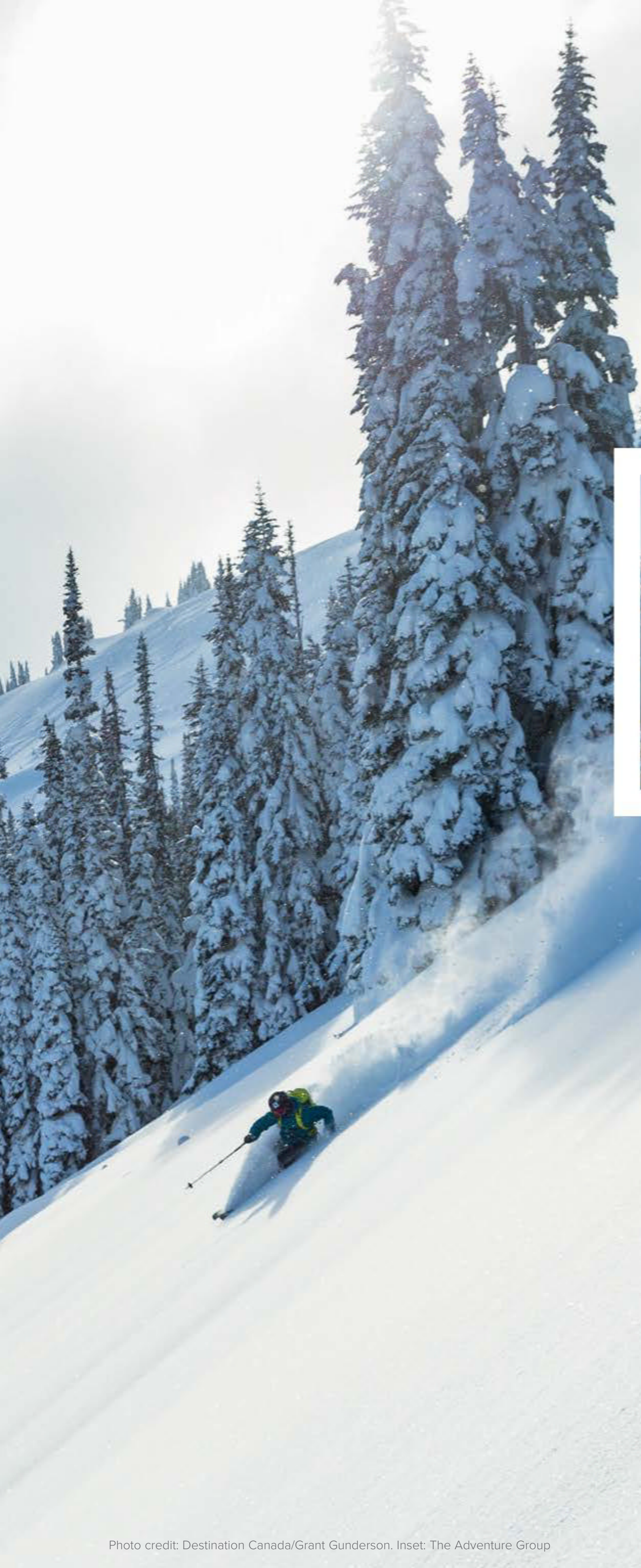


Photo credit: Destination Canada/Grant Gunderson. Inset: The Adventure Group

WIDER THAN WONDER

Winter in Whistler is magnetic. From breathtaking alpine terrain, to the endless options of the Village, its diverse offering of rugged West Coast Canadian beauty, passionate community, and refined experiences continue to attract adventurous travellers from around the world, year after year.

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